THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGVE

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THE Government OF THE TONGUE.

By the Author of
THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN, &c.

Death and Life are in the power of the Tongue, Prov. 18. 21.

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The Preface.

THE Government of the Tongue has ever bin juſtly reputed one of the moſt important parts of human Regiment. The Philoſopher and the Divine equally atteſt this; and Solomon *(who was both) gives his ſuffrage alſo; the perſwaſions to, and encomium's of it taking up a conſiderable part of his book of Proverbs. I ſhall not therefore need to ſay any thing, to*

to juſtifie my choice of this ſubject, which has ſo much better authorities to commend it: I rather wiſh that it had not the ſuperaddition of an accidental fitneſs grounded upon the univerſal neglect of it, it now ſeeming to be an art wholly out-dated. For tho ſome lineaments of it be met with in books, yet there is ſcarce any footſteps of it in practice, where alone it can be ſignificant. The attemt therefore of reviving it I am ſure is ſeaſonable, I wiſh it were half as eaſy.

2. *Indeed that skill was never very eaſy, it requiring the greateſt vigilance and caution, and therefore not to be attain'd by looſe trifling ſpirits. The Tongue is ſo ſlippery, that it eaſily deceives a drouſie or heedleſs guard. Nature ſeems to have given it ſome unhap-*

unhappy advantage towards that. 'Tis in its frame the moſt ready for motion of any member, needs not ſo much as the flexure of a joint, and by acceſs of humors acquires a glibneſs too, the more to facilitate its moving. And alas! we too much find the effect of this its eaſie frame. It often goes without giving us warning; and as children when they happen upon a rolling engine, can ſet it in ſuch a carriere, as wiſer people cannot on a ſudden ſtop; ſo the childiſh parts of us, our paſſions, our fancies, all our mere animal faculties, can thruſt our tongues into ſuch diſorders, as our reaſon cannot eaſily rectifie. The due managery therefore of this unruly member, may rightly be eſteemed one of the greateſt myſteries of wiſdom and vertue. This is intimated

intimated by St. *James*, If any man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man, and able alſo to bridle the whole body, Jam. 3. 2. *'Tis ſtoried of* Bembo *a primitive Chriſtian, that coming to a friend to teach him a Pſalm, he began to him the thirty ninth*, I ſaid I will look to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue; *upon hearing of which firſt verſe, he ſtopt his tutor, ſaying, This is enough for me, if I learn it as I ought; and being after ſix months rebuk'd for not coming again, he replied, that he had not yet learnt his firſt leſſon: nay after nineteen years he profeſt, that in that time he had ſcarce learnt to fulfill that one line. I give not this inſtance to diſcourage, but rather to quicken men to the ſtudy for a leſſon that requires ſo much time*

to

to learn, had need be early begun with.

3. *But eſpecially in this age, wherein the contrary liberty has got ſuch a prepoſſeſſion, that men look on it as a part of their birth-right, nay do not only let their tongues looſe, but ſtudiouſly ſuggeſt inordinancies to them, and uſe the ſpur where they ſhould the bridle. By this means converſation is ſo generally corrupted, that many have had cauſe to wiſh they had not been made ſociable creatures. A man ſecluded from company can have but the devil and himſelf to tempt him, but he that converſes has almoſt as many ſnares as he has companions. Men barter vices, and, as if each had not enough of his own growth, tranſplant out of his neighbours ſoil, and that which was intended*

to cultivate and civilize the world, has turned it into a wild deſert and wilderneſs.

4. *This face of things I confeſs looks not very promiſing to one who is to ſolicite a reformation. But whatever the hopes are, I am ſure the needs are great enough to juſtify the attempt. For as the diſeaſe is epidemic, ſo it is mortal alſo, utterly inconſiſtent with that pure religion, which leads to life. We may take* St. James's *word for it,* If any man ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that mans religion is vain, Jam. 1. 26. *God knows we have not much religion among us: 'tis great pity we ſhould fruſtrate the little we have, render that utterly inſignificant, which at the beſt amounts to ſo little. Let therefore the difficulty and neceſſity*

neceſſity of the task, prevail with us to take time before us, not to defer this ſo neceſſary a work till the night come; or imagine that the Tongue will be able to expiate its whole age of guilt by a feeble Lord have mercy on me *at the laſt. Tho indeed if that were ſuppoſable, 'twere but a broken reed to truſt to, none knowing whether he ſhall have time or grace for that. He may be ſurpriz'd with an Oath, a Blaſphemy, a Detraction in his mouth: many have bin ſo. 'Tis ſure there muſt be a dying moment; and how can any man ſecure himſelf, it ſhall not be the ſame with that in which he utters thoſe, and his expiring breath be ſo emploied? Sure they cannot think that thoſe incantations (tho helliſh enough) can make them ſhot-free, render them*

invulnerable to deaths darts; and if they have not that or ſome other as ridiculous reſerves, 'tis ſtrange what ſhould make them run ſuch a mad adventure.

5. *But I expect it ſhould be objected, that this little deſpicable Tract is not proportionable to the encounter to which it is brought, that beſides the unskilful managing of thoſe points it do's touch, it wholly omits many proper to the ſubject, there being faults of the Tongue which it paſſes in ſilence. I confeſs there is color enough for this objection. But I believe if it were put to votes, more would reſolve I had ſaid too much, rather than too little. Should I have enlarged to the utmoſt compaſs of this Theme, I ſhould have made the volume of ſo affrighting a bulk,*

that

that few would have attemted it; and by ſaying much I ſhould have ſaid nothing at all to thoſe who moſt need it. Mens ſtomachs are generally ſo queaſie in theſe caſes, that 'tis not ſafe to overload them. Let them try how they can digeſt this; if they can ſo as to turn it into kindly nouriſhment, they will be able to ſupply themſelves with the remainder. For I think I may with ſome confidence affirm, that he that can confine his tongue within the limits here preſcrib'd, may without much difficulty reſtrain its other excurſions. All I ſhall beg of the Reader, is but to come with ſincere intentions, and then perhaps theſe few ſtones *and* ſling *uſed in the name, and with invocation of the* Lord of hoſts, *may countervail the maſſive armor of the* uncircumciſed

ciſed Philiſtin. *And may that God who loves to magnifie his power in weakneſs, give it the like ſucceſs.*

THE

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OF THE
Government of the Tongue.

SECT. I.

Of the Uſe of Speech.

1. MAN at his firſt creation was ſubſtituted by God as his Vice-gerent, to receive the homage, and enjoy the ſervices of all inferior beings: nay farther, was endowed with excellencies fit to maintain the port of ſo vaſt an empire. Yet thoſe very excellencies, as they qualified him for dominion, ſo they unfitted

him for a ſatisfaction or acquieſcence in thoſe his vaſſals: the dignity of his nature ſet him above the ſociety or converſe of mere animals: ſo that in all the pomp of his roialty, amidſt all the throng and variety of creatures, he ſtill remain'd ſolitary. But God, who knew what an appetite of ſociety he had implanted in him, judged this no agreeable ſtate for him, *It is not meet that man ſhould be alone*, Gen. 2. 18. And as in the univerſal frame of nature, he ingraffed ſuch an abhorrence of vacuity, that all creatures do rather ſubmit to a preternatural motion than admit it; ſo, in this empty, this deſtitute condition of man, he relieved him by a miraculous expedient, divided him that he might unite him, and made one part of him an aſſociate for the other.

2. NEITHER did God take this care to provide him a companion, meerly for the entercourſes of ſenſe: had that bin the ſole aim, there needed no new productions, there were ſenſitive creatures enough: the deſign was to entertain his nobler principle, his reaſon, with a more equal converſe, aſſign him an intimate, whoſe intellect as much correſponded with

with his, as did the outward form, whoſe heart, according to *Solomons* reſemblance, anſwered his, *as in water face anſwers face.* Prov. 27. 19. with whom he might communicate minds, traffic and enterchange all the notions and ſentiments of a reaſonable ſoul.

3. BUT tho there were this ſympathy in their ſublimer part which diſpoſed them to the moſt intimate union; yet there was a cloud of fleſh in the way which intercepted their mutual view, nay permitted no intelligence between them, other than by the mediation of ſome organ equally commenſurate to ſoul and body. And to this purpoſe the infinite wiſdom of God ordained ſpeech; which as it is a ſound reſulting from the modulation of the air, has moſt affinity to the ſpirit, but as it is uttered by the tongue, has immediate cognation with the body, and ſo is the fitteſt inſtrument to manage a commerce between the rational yet inviſible powers of human ſouls cloathed in fleſh.

4. AND as we have reaſon to admire the excellency of this contrivance, ſo have we to applaud the extenſiveneſs of the benefit. From this it is we derive all

the advantages of ſociety: without this men of the neareſt neighbourhood would have ſignified no more to each other than our *Antipodes* now do to us. All our arts and ſciences for the accommodation of this life, had remain'd only a rude Chaos in their firſt matter, had not ſpeech by a mutual comparing of notions ranged them into order. By this it is we can give one another notice of our wants, and ſolicit relief; by this we interchangably communicate advices, reproofs, conſolations, all the neceſſary aids of human imbecillity. This is that which poſſeſſes us of the moſt valuable bleſſing of human life, I mean friendſhip, which could no more have been contracted amongſt dumb men, than it can between pictures and ſtatues. Nay farther to this we ow in a great degree the intereſts even of our ſpiritual being, all the oral, yea and written revelations too of Gods will: for had there bin no language there had bin no writing. And tho we muſt not pronounce how far God might have evidenced himſelf to mankind by immediate inſpiration of every individual, yet we may ſafely reſt in the apoſtles inference Rom. 10. 14. *How ſhall they believe in him*

him of whom they have not heard, and how ſhall they hear without a preacher?

5. FROM all theſe excellent uſes of it in reſpect of man, we may collect another in relation to God, that is, the *praiſing* and *magnifying* his goodneſs, as for all other effects of his bounty, ſo particularly that he hath given us language, and all the conſequent advantages of it. This is the juſt inference of the ſon of *Syrach* Eccluſ. 51. 22. *The Lord hath given me a tongue, and I will praiſe him therewith.* This is the ſacrifice which God calls for ſo often by the prophets, *the calves of our lips*, which anſwers to all *the oblations out of the herd*, and which the apoſtle makes equivalent to thoſe of the *floor* and *wine-preſs* alſo, Heb. 13. 15. *The fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.* To this we frequently find the pſalmiſt exciting both himſelf and others, *Awake up my glory, I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the people, and I will ſing unto thee among the nations*, Pſal. 57. 8, 9. And, *O praiſe the Lord with me, and let us magnify his name together*, Pſal. 34. 3. And indeed whoever obſerves that excellent magazine of devotion, the book of Pſalms, ſhall find that the *lauds* make up a very great part of it.

6. By

6. By what hath bin ſaid, we may define what are the grand uſes of ſpeech, viz. the glorifying of God, and the benefiting of men. And this helps us to an infallible teſt by which to try our words. For ſince every thing is ſo far approvable as it anſwers the end of its being, what part ſoever of our diſcourſes agrees not with the primitive ends of ſpeech, will not hold weight in the balance of the ſanctuary. It will therefore nearly concern us to enter upon this ſcrutiny, to bring our words to this touch-ſtone: for tho in our depraved eſtimate the eloquence of language is more regarded then the innocence, tho we think our words vaniſh with the breath that utters them, yet they become records in Gods Court, are laid up in his archives as witneſſes either for, or againſt us: for he who is truth it ſelf hath told us, that *by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned.* Matt. 12. 37.

SECT.

SECT. II.

Of the manifold Abuſe of Speech.

1. AND now ſince the original deſigns of ſpeaking are ſo noble, ſo advantageous, one would be apt to conclude no rational creature would be temted to pervert them, ſince 'tis ſure he can ſubſtitute none for them, that can equally conduce, either to his honor, or intereſt.

2. YET experience (that great baffler of ſpeculation) aſſures us the thing is too poſſible, and brings in all ages matter of fact to confute our ſuppoſitions. So liable alas! is ſpeech to be depraved, that the Scripture deſcribes it as the ſource of all our other depravation. Original ſin came firſt out at the mouth by ſpeaking, before it entred in by eating. The firſt uſe we find *Eve* to have made of her language, was to enter parly with the tempter, and from that to become a temter to her huſband. And immediatly upon the fall, guilty *Adam* frames his tongue to a frivolous excuſe

excuſe, which was much leſs able to cover his ſin then the fig-leaves were his nakedneſs. And as in the infancy of the firſt world, the tongue had licked up the venim of the old ſerpent, ſo neither could the deluge waſh it off in the ſecond. No ſooner was that ſmall colony (wherewith the depopulated earth was to be replanted) come forth of the ark, but we meet with *Cham* a delator to his own father, inviting his brethren to that execrable ſpectacle of their parents nakedneſs.

3. Nor did this only run in the blood of that accurſed perſon; the holy ſeed was not totally free from its infection, even the Patriarchs themſelves were not exemt. *Abraham* uſed a repeated colluſion in the caſe of his wife, and expoſed his own integrity to preſerve her chaſtity. *Iſaac* the heir of his bleſſing, was ſon of his infirmity alſo, and acted over the ſame ſcene upon *Rebecca*'s account. *Jacob* obtain'd his fathers bleſſing by a flat lie. *Simeon* and *Levi* ſpake not only falſly, but inſidiouſly, nay hypocritically, abuſing at once their proſelytes, and their religion, for the effecting their cruel deſigns upon the *Shechemites*. *Moſes* tho a man of an unparallel'd meekneſs, yet *ſpake unadviſedly with*

with his lips, Pſal. 106. 33. *David* uttered a bloody vow againſt *Nabal*, ſpake *words ſmoother then oil* to *Uriah*, when he had done him one injury, and deſign'd him another. 'Twere endleſs to reckon up thoſe ſeveral inſtances the old Teſtament gives us of theſe lapſes of the tongue: neither want there divers in the new; tho there is one of ſo much horror, as ſuperſedes the naming more, I mean that of St. *Peter* in his reiterated abjuring his Lord, a crime which (abſtracted from the intention) ſeems worſe than that of *Judas*: that traitor owned his relation, cried, *Maſter*, *Maſter*, even when he betraied him, ſo that had he been meaſured only by his tongue, he might have paſt for the better diſciple.

4. THESE are ſad inſtances, not recorded to patronize the ſin, but to excite our caution. It was a politic inference of the elders of Iſrael in the caſe of *Jehu*? *Behold two kings ſtood not before him, how then ſhall we ſtand*? 2 Kin 10. 4. And we may well apply it to this; if perſons of ſo circumſpect a piety, have bin thus overtaken, what ſecurity can there be for our retchleſs oſcitancy? if thoſe who *kept* their *mouths as it were with a*

bridle, Pſal. 39. 1. could not alwaies preſerve them innocent, to what guilts may not our unreſtrained licentious tongues hurry us? Thoſe which, as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaketh Pſal. 73. 9. *go thro the world*, are in that unbounded range very likely to meet with him who walks the ſame round, *Job* 2. 2. and by him be tuned and ſet to his key, be ſcrued and wreſted from their proper uſe, and made ſubſervient to his vileſt deſigns.

5. And would God this were only a probable ſuppoſition! but alas experience ſupplants the uſe of conjecture in the point: we do not only preſume it may be ſo, but actually find it is ſo. For amidſt the univerſal depravation of our faeulties, there is none more notorious than that of ſpeech. Whither ſhall we turn us to find it in its priſtine integrity? Amidſt that infinity of words in which we exhauſt our breath, how few are there which do at all correſpond with the original deſignation of ſpeech; nay which do not flatly contradict it? To what unholy, uncharitable purpoſes is that uſeful faculty perverted? That which was meant to ſerve as the perfume of the tabernacle, to ſend up the incenſes of praiſes and praiers, now

now exhales in impious vapors, to eclipſe if it were poſſible, the Father of light. That which ſhould be the ſtore-houſe of relief and refreſhment to our brethren, is become a magazine of all offenſive weapons againſt them, *ſpears and arrows and ſharp ſwords*, as the pſalmiſt often phraſes it. We do not only fall by the ſlipperineſs of our tongues, but we deliberately diſcipline and train them to miſchief. *We bend our tongues as our bows for lies*, as the prophet ſpeaks, *Jer.* 9. 3. And, in a word, what God affirmed of the old world in relation to thoughts, is too appliable to our words, they *are evil and that continually*, Gen. 6. 5. and that which was intended for the inſtrument, the aid of human ſociety, is become the diſturber, the peſt of it.

6. I ſhall not attemt a particular diſcuſſion of all the vices of the tongue: it doth indeed paſs all Geography to draw an exact Map of that *world of iniquity*, as St. *James* calls it. I ſhall only draw the greater lines, and diſtribute it into its principal and more eminent parts, which are diſtinguiſhable as they relate to God, our Neighbour, and our ſelves; in each of which I ſhall rather make an eſſay by

way of inſtance, then attemt an exact enumeration or ſurvey.

Sect. III.

Of Atheiſtical Diſcourſe.

1. I Begin with thoſe which relate to God; this poor deſpicable member the tongue being of ſuch a gigantic inſolence tho not ſize, as even to make war with heaven. 'Tis true every diſordered ſpeech doth remotely ſo, as it is a violation of God's law; but now I ſpeak only of thoſe which as it were attaque his perſon, and immediately fly in the face of Omnipotency. In the higheſt rank of theſe we may well place all atheiſtical diſcourſe, which is that bold ſort of rebellion, which ſtrikes not only at his authority, but himſelf. Other blaſphemies level ſome at one attribute, ſome another; but this by a more compendious impiety, ſhoots at his very being, and as if it ſcorn'd thoſe piece-meal guilts, ſets up a ſingle monſter big enough to devour them all: for all inferior

ferior profaneneſs is as much out-dared by atheiſm, as is religion it ſelf.

2. TIME was when the inveighing againſt this, would have bin thought a very impertinent ſubject in a Chriſtian nation, and men would have replied upon me as the *Spartan* Lady did, when ſhe was ask'd what was the puniſhment for adultereſſes, *There are no ſuch things here.* Nay even amongſt the moſt barbarous people, it could have concerned but ſome few ſingle perſons; no numbers, much leſs ſocieties of men, having ever excluded the belief of a Deity. And perhaps it may at this day concern them as little as ever; for amidſt the various deities and worſhips of thoſe remoter nations, we have yet no account of any that renounce all. 'Tis only our light hath ſo blinded us: ſo that God may upbraid us as he did Iſrael, *Hath a nation changed their gods which yet are no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit*, Jer. 2. 11. This madneſs is now the incloſure, the peculiarity of thoſe who by their names and inſtitution ſhould be Chriſtians: as if that natural aphoriſm, *That when things are at the height they muſt fall again*, had place here alſo, and

and our being of the moſt excellent, moſt elevated religion, were but the preparative to our being of none.

3. 'Tis indeed deplorable to ſee, how the profeſſors of no God begin to vie numbers with all the different perſwaſions in religion, ſo that atheiſm ſeems to be the gulph that finally ſwallows up all our ſects. It has ſtruck on a ſudden into ſuch a reputation, that it ſcorns any longer to ſculk, but owns it ſelf more publickly than moſt men dare do the contrary. 'Tis ſet down in the ſeat of the ſcorner, and ſince it cannot argue, reſolves to laugh all piety out of countenance; and having ſeized the mint, nothing ſhall paſs for wit that hath not its ſtamp, and with it there is no metal of ſo baſe an alloy, but ſhall go current. Every the dulleſt creature that can but ſtoutly diſclaim its maker, has by it ſufficiently ſecured its title to ingenuity; and ſuch meaſures being once eſtabliſhed, no wonder at its ſholes of proſelytes, when it gives on the one hand licence to all ſenſual ordinancies, permits them to be as much beaſts as they will, or can; and yet tells them on the other, that they are the more men for it. Sure 'tis not ſtrange that a hook thus doubly baited

ſhould

ſhould catch many. Either of thoſe allurements ſingle, we ſee, has force enough. The charms of ſenſuality are ſo faſcinating, that even thoſe who believe another world, and the ſevere revenges that will there attend their luxuries, yet chuſe to take them in preſent with all the diſmal reverſions. And then ſure it cannot but be very good news to ſuch an one to be told, that that after-reckoning is but a falſe alarm, and his great willingneſs to have it true, will eaſily incline him to believe it is ſo. And doubtleſs were atheiſm traced up to its firſt cauſes, this would be found the moſt operative; 'tis ſo convenient for a man that will have no God to controll or reſtrain him, to have none to puniſh him neither; that that utility paſſes into argument, and he will rather put a cheat upon his underſtanding by concluding there is no future account, than leave ſuch a ſting in his pleaſures, as the remembrance of it muſt needs prove. This ſeems to be the original and firſt riſe of this impiety, it being impoſſible for any man that ſees the whole, nay but the ſmalleſt part of the univerſe, to doubt of a firſt and ſupreme Being, until from the conſciouſneſs of his

his provocations, it become his interest there should be none.

4. This is indeed, considering the depravation of the world, a pretty fast tenure for atheism to hold by; yet it has of late twisted its cord, and got that other string to its bow we before mentioned. Its bold monopolizing of wit and reason compells, as the other invited men. This we may indeed call the devils press, bywhich he hath filled up his troops: men are afraid of being reproched for silly and irrational, in giving themselves up to a blind belief of what they do not see. And this bugbear frights them from their religion; resolving they will be *no fools for Christs sake*, 1 Cor. 4. 10. I dare appeal to the breasts of many in this age, whether this have not bin one of the most prevalent temtations with them to espouse the tenet: and tho perhaps they at first took it up, only in their own defence, for fear of being thought fools, yet that fear soon converts into ambition of being thought wits. They do not satisfy themselves with deserting their religion, unless they revile it also; remembring how themselves were laught out of it, they essay to do the like by others. Yea so

ſo zealous propugners are they of their negative Creed, that they are importunately diligent to inſtruct men in it, and in all the little ſophiſtries and colors for defending it: ſo that he that would meaſure their opinions by their induſtry, and the remiſſneſs of believers, would certainly think that the great intereſt of eternity lay wholly on their ſide. Yet I take not this for any argument of the confidence of this perſwaſion, but the contrary: for we know they are not the ſecure, but the deſperate undertakings, wherein men are moſt deſirous of partners, and there is ſomewhat of horror in an uncouth way, which makes men unwilling to travel it alone.

5. THE truth is, tho theſe men ſpeak big, and preſcribe as poſitively to their pupils, as if they had ſome counter-revelation to confute thoſe of *Moſes* and *Chriſt*, yet were their ſecret thoughts laid open, there would ſcarce be found the like aſſurance there. I will not ſay to what reprobate ſenſe ſome particular perſons may have provoked God to deliver them, but in the generality, I believe one may affirm, that there is ſeldom an infidelity ſo ſanguine as to exclude all fears. Their

moſt bold *Theſis*, That there is no God, no judgment, no hell, is often met with an inward tremulous *Hypotheſis*, What if there be? I dare in this remit me to themſelves, and challenge (not their conſciences, who profeſs to have none, but) their natural ingenuity to ſay, whether they have not ſometimes ſuch damps and ſhiverings within them. If they ſhall ſay, that theſe are but the reliques of prepoſſeſſion and education, which their reaſon ſoon diſſipates: Let me then ask them farther, whether they would not give a conſiderable ſum to be infallibly aſcertained there were no ſuch thing. Now no ſenſible man would give a farthing to be ſecured from a thing which his reaſon tells him is impoſſible; therefore if they would give any thing (as I dare ſay they themſelves cannot deny that they would) 'tis a tacite demonſtration that they are not ſo ſure as they pretend to be.

6. I might here join iſſue upon the whole, and preſs them with the unreaſonableneſs, the diſingenuouſneſs of embracing a profeſſion to which their own hearts have an inward reluctance, nay the imprudence of governing their lives by

by that poſition, which for ought they know may be (nay they actually fear is) falſe, and if it be, muſt inevitably immerſe them in endleſs ruin. But I muſt remember my deſign limits me only to the faults of the tongue, and therefore I muſt not follow this chaſe beyond thoſe bounds. I ſhall only extend it to my proper ſubject, that of *atheiſtical* talk, wherein they make as mad an adventure as in any other of their enormous practices, nay perhaps in ſome reſpects a worſe.

7. IN the firſt place 'tis to be conſidered, that if there be a God, he, as well as men, may be provoked by our words as well as deeds. Secondly 'tis poſſible he may be more. Our ill deeds may be done upon a vehement impulſe of temtation; ſome profit or pleaſure may tranſport and hurry us; and they may at leaſt have this alleviation, that we did them to pleaſe or advantage our ſelves, not to ſpight God. But *atheiſtical* words cannot be ſo palliated: they are arrows directly ſhot againſt heaven, and can come out of no quiver but malice; for 'tis certain there never was man that ſaid, there was no God, but he wiſhed it firſt. We know

what an enhancement our injuries to each other receive from their being malicious: and ſure they will do ſo much more to God, whoſe principal demand from us is, that we give him our heart. But thirdly this implieth a malice of the higheſt ſort. Human ſpight is uſually confined within ſome bounds, aims ſometimes at the goods, ſometimes at the fame, at moſt but at the life of our neighbour; but here is an accumulation of all thoſe, back'd with the moſt prodigious inſolence. 'Tis God only that has power of annihilation, and we (vile worms) ſeek here to ſteal that incommunicable right, and retort it upon himſelf, and by an anti-creative power would unmake him who has made us. Nay laſtly, by this we have not only the utmoſt guilt of ſingle rebels, but we become ring-leaders alſo, draw in others to that accurſed aſſociation: for 'tis only this liberty of diſcourſe that hath propagated *atheiſm*. The devil might perhaps by inward ſuggeſtions have drawn in here and there a ſingle proſelyte; but he could never have had ſuch numbers, had he not uſed ſome as decoys to enſnare others.

8. And now let the brisk *atheiſt* a little

little conſider, what theſe aggravations will amount to. 'Twas good counſel was given to the Athenians, *viz.* to be very ſure *Philip* was dead, before they expreſſed their joy at his death, leſt they might find him alive to revenge that haſty triumph. And the like I may give to theſe men: Let them be very ſure there is no God, before they preſume thus to defie him, leſt they find him at laſt aſſert his being in their deſtruction. Certainly nothing leſs than a demonſtration can juſtify the reaſonableneſs of ſuch a daring. And when they can produce that, they have ſo far outgone all the comprehenſions of mankind, they may well challenge the liberty of their tongue, and ſay, *They are their own, who is Lord over them*, Pſal. 12. 4.

9. BUT till this be done, 'twere well they would ſoberly ballance the hazards of this liberty with the gains of it. The hazards are of the moſt dreadful kind, the gains of the ſlighteſt: the moſt is but a vain applauſe of wit for an impious jeſt, or of reaſon for a deep conſiderer; and yet even for that they muſt incroach on the devils right too, who is commonly the promter, and therefore if there be any credit in it, may juſtly challenge it.

Indeed

Indeed 'tis to be fear'd he will at laſt prove the maſter-wit, when as for thoſe little loans he makes them, he gets their ſouls in mortgage. Would God they would conſider betimes, what a woful rallery that will be, which for ought they know may end in *gnaſhing of teeth.*

10. THE next impiety of the tongue is ſwearing, that fooliſh ſin which plaies the *Platonic* to damnation, and courts it purely for its ſelf, without any of the appendant allurements which other ſins have: a vice, which for its guilt may juſtify the ſharpeſt, and for its cuſtomarineſs the frequenteſt invectives which can be made againſt it. But it has been aſſaulted ſo often by better pens, and has ſhewed it ſelf ſo much proof againſt all homily, that it is as needleſs as diſcouraging a task for me to attemt it. 'Tis indeed a thing taken up ſo perfectly without all ſenſe, that 'tis the leſs wonder to find it maintain it ſelf upon the ſame principle 'tis founded, and continue in the ſame defiance to reaſon wherein it began.

11. ALL therefore that I ſhall ſay concerning it, is to expreſs my wonder how it has made a ſhift to twiſt it ſelf with the former ſin of *Atheiſm*, by which according

cording to all rules of reaſoning it ſeems to be ſuperſeded: and yet we ſee none own God more in their oaths, than thoſe that diſavow him in their other diſcourſe. Nay ſuch men ſwear not only to ſwell their language, and make it ſound more full and bluſtring; but even when they moſt deſire to be believed. What an abſurdity of wickedneſs is this? Is there a God to ſwear by, and is there none to believe in, none to pray to? We call it frenzy to ſee a man fight with a ſhadow; but ſure it is more ſo to invoke it. Why then do theſe men of reaſon make ſuch ſolemn appeals (for ſuch every oath is) to a mere chimera and phantaſm? It would make one think they had ſome inward belief of a deity, which they upon ſurprizal thus blurt out: if it argue not this, it does ſomething worſe, and becomes an evidence how much the appearance of a ſin recommends it to them, that they thus catch at it, without examining how it will conſiſt with another they like better. Theſe are indeed wholeſale chapmen to Satan, that do not truck and barter one crime for another, but take the whole herd: and tho by reaſon of their diſagreeing kinds they are apt to gore

gore and worry each other; yet he ſtill keeps up his old policy, and will not let one devil caſt out another. A league ſhall be made between the moſt diſcordant ſins, and there ſhall be a God, or there ſhall be none, according as oportunity ſerves to provoke him: ſo aſſuming to himſelf a power which even omnipotence diſclaims, the reconciling contradictions. And he ſucceeds in it as far as his concern reaches: for tho he cannot ſolve the repugnancies in reaſon, yet as long as he can unite the ſins in mens practice, he has his deſign; nay has at once the gain and the ſport of fooling theſe great pretenders to ratiocination.

12. A third ſort of impious diſcourſe there is, which yet is bottom'd on the moſt ſacred, I mean thoſe profane paraphraſes that are uſually made upon the holy text, many making it the ſubject of their cavils, and others of their mirth. Some do it out of the former *atheiſtical* principle, and I cannot but confeſs they act conſonantly to themſelves in it, for 'tis but a needful artifice for men to diſparage thoſe teſtimonies, which they fear may be brought againſt them. But there are others who not only profeſs a God, but alſo own the

the ſacred Scripture for his word, and yet uſe it as courſly as the others. And theſe, I confeſs, are riddles of profaneneſs, that hang, as ſome have pictured *Solomon*, between heaven and hell, borrow the chriſtians faith, and the *atheiſts* drollery upon it: and 'tis hard to ſay in which they are more in earneſt. It is indeed ſcandalous to ſee, to what deſpicable uſes thoſe holy oracles are put: ſuch as ſhould a heathen obſerve, he would little ſuſpect them to be own'd by us as the rule of our religion, and could never think they were ever meant for any thing beyond a whet-ſtone for wit. One tries his logic upon them, and objects to the ſenſe; another his Rhetoric, and quarrels at the phraſe; a third his contrivance, and thinks he could have woven the parts with a better contexture: never conſidering, that unleſs they could confute the divinity of their original, all theſe accuſations are nothing elſe but direct blaſphemy, the making God *ſuch an one as themſelves*, Pſal. 50. 21. and charging him with thoſe defects which are indeed their own. They want learning or induſtry to ſound the depth of thoſe ſacred treaſures, and therefore they decry

the Scripture as mean and poor; and to juſtify their own wiſdom, diſpute God's. This is as if the mole ſhould complain the ſun is dark, becauſe he dwells under ground, and ſees not his ſplendor. Men are indeed in all inſtances apt to ſpeak ill of all things they underſtand not, but in none more than this. Their ignorance of local cuſtoms, idioms of language, and ſeveral other circumſtances, renders them incompetent judges, (as has bin excellently evinced by a late Author.) 'Twill therefore befit them, either to qualify themſelves better, or to ſpare their criticiſms. But upon the whole, I think I may challenge any ingenuous man, to produce any writing of that antiquity, whoſe phraſe and genius is ſo accommodated to all ſucceſſions of ages. Styles and ways of addreſs we know grow obſolete, and are almoſt antiquated as garments: and yet after ſo long a tract of time, the Scripture muſt (by conſidering men) be confeſt to ſpeak not only properly, but often politely and elegantly to the preſent age: a great argument that it is the dictate of him that is, *The ſame yeſterday, to day, and for ever*, Heb. 13. 8.

13. But

13. BUT beſides theſe more ſolemn traducers, there are a lighter ludicrous ſort of profaners, who uſe the Scripture as they do odd ends of plays, to furniſh out their jeſts; cloath all their little impertinent conceits in it's language, and debaſe it by the mixture of ſuch miſerable trifles, as themſelves would be aſhamed of, were they not heightned and inſpirited by that profaneneſs. A bible-phraſe ſerves them in diſcourſe as the haut-gouſt do's in dyet, to give a relish to the moſt inſipid ſtuff. And were it not for this magazine, a great many men's rallery would want ſupplies: for there are divers who make a great noiſe of wit, that would be very mute, if this one Topic were barr'd them. And indeed it ſeems a tacite confeſſion, that they have little of their own, when they are fain thus to commit ſacrilege to drive on the trade. But ſure 'tis a pitiful pretence to ingenuity that can be thus kept up, there being little need of any other faculty but memory to be able to cap Texts. I am ſure ſuch repetitions out of other books would be thought pedantic and ſilly. How ridiculous would a man be, that ſhould alwaies enterlard his

diſcourſe with fragments of *Horace*, or *Virgil*, or the aphoriſms of *Pythagoras*, or *Seneca*? Now 'tis too evident, that it is not from any ſuperlative eſteem of ſacred writ, that it is ſo often quoted: and why ſhould it then be thought a ſpecimen of wit to do it there, when 'tis folly in other inſtances? The truth is, 'tis ſo much the reſerve of thoſe who can give no better teſtimony of their parts, that methinks upon that very ſcore it ſhould be given over by thoſe that can. And ſure were it poſſible for any thing that is ſo bad to grow unfaſhionable, the world has had enough of this to be cloyed with it: but how fond ſoever men are of this divertiſement, 'twill finally prove that *mirth Solomon* ſpeaks of, which *ends in heavineſs*, Prov. 14. 13. for certainly whether we eſtimate it according to humane or divine meaſures, it muſt be a high provocation of God.

14. Let any of us but put the caſe in our own perſons: ſuppoſe we had written to a friend, to advertiſe him of things of the greateſt importance to himſelf, had given him ample and exact inſtructions, back'd them with earneſt exhortations and conjurings not to neglect his own

own concern, and laſtly enforced all with the moſt moving expreſſions of kindneſs and tenderneſs to him: ſuppoſe, I ſay, that after all this, the next news we ſhould hear of that letter, were to have it put in doggrel rhime, to be made ſport for the rabble, or at the beſt have the moſt eminent phraſes of it pickt out and made a common by-word: I would fain know how any of us would reſent ſuch a mixture of ingratitude and contumely. I think I need make no minute application. The whole deſign of the Bible do's ſufficiently anſwer, nay outgo the firſt part of the paraleel, and God knows our vile uſage of it do's too much (I fear too literally) adapt the latter. And if we think the affront too baſe for one of us, can we believe God will take it in good part? That were to make him not only more ſtupid than any man, but as much ſo as the heathen idols, that have *eyes and ſee not*: Pſal. 115. 5. And 'tis ſure the higheſt madneſs in the world, for any man that believes that there is a God, to imagine he will finally ſit down by ſuch uſage.

15. BUT if we weigh it in the ſcale of religion; the crime will yet appear more hei-

heinous. Mere natural piety has taught men to receive the reſponſes of their gods with all poſſible veneration. What applications had the *Delphic* oracle from all parts, and from all ranks of men? What confidence had they in its prediction, and what obedience did they pay to its advice? If we look next into the Moſaical oeconomy, we ſhall ſee with what dreadful ſolemnities that law was promulged, what an awful reverence was paid to the mount whence it iſſued, how it was fenced from any rude intruſions either of men or beaſts: and after it was written in tables, all the whole equipage of the Tabernacle, was deſigned only for its more decent repoſitory, the Ark it ſelf receiving its value only from what it had in cuſtody. Yea ſuch a hallowing influence had it, as transfuſed a relative ſanctity even to the meaneſt utenſils, none of which were after to be put to common uſes: the very perfume was ſo peculiar and ſacred, that it was a capital crime to imitate the compoſition. Afterwards when more of the divine revelations were committed to writing, the Jews were ſuch ſcrupulous reverers of it, that 'twas the buſineſs

of

of the *Maſorites*, to number not only the ſections and lines, but even the words and letters of the old Teſtament, that by that exact calculation they might the better ſecure it from any ſurreptitious practices.

16. AND ſure the new Teſtament is not of leſs concern than the old: nay the apoſtle aſſerts it to be of far greater, and which we ſhall be more accountable for, *For if the word ſpoken by angels were ſtedfaſt, and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience received a juſt recompence; how ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken to us by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?* Heb. 2. 2. 3. And it is in another place the inference of the ſame Apoſtle, from the excellency of the Goſpel above the Law, that we ſhould *ſerve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*, Heb. 12. 28. And certainly 'tis but an ill eſſay of that reverence and godly fear, to uſe that very goſpel ſo irreverently and ungodlily as men now do. If we paſs from the apoſtolic to the next ſucceeding ages of the church, we find the primitive chriſtians looked on their Bibles as their moſt

important

important treaſure. Such was the outward reſpects they paid to them, (of which the ſtanding up at the reading of the goſpel, ſtill in uſe among us, is a faint memorial) that the heathen perſecutors made it one part of their examination of the chriſtians brought to their tribunals, *What thoſe books were which they adored while they read them?* Such was their intimate eſteem, that they expoſed all things elſe to the rapine of their enemies, ſo they might ſecure thoſe volumes. Nor was this only an heroic piece of zeal in ſome, but indiſpenſably required of all: inſomuch that when in the heat of perſecution, they were commanded to deliver up their Bibles to be burnt, the Church gave no indulgence for that neceſſity of the times, but exhorted men rather to deliver up their lives: and thoſe whoſe courage failed them in the encounter, were not only branded by the infamous name of *Traditors*, but ſeparated from the communion of the faithful, and not re-admitted till after many years of the ſevereſt penance.

17. I have given this brief narration, with a deſire that the reader will compare the practice of former times with

thoſe of the preſent, and ſee what he can find either among Heathens, Jews, or Chriſtians, that can at all patronize our profaneneſs. There was no reſpect thought too much for the falſe oracles of a falſer God; and yet we think no contemts too great for thoſe of the true. The moral Law was ſo ſacred to the Jews, that no parts of its remoteſt retinue, thoſe ceremonial attendants were to be lookt on as common: and we who are equally obliged by that law, laugh at that by which we muſt one day be judged. The ritual, the preceptive, the prophetic, and all other parts of ſacred writ, were moſt ſedulouſly, moſt religiouſly guarded by them: and we look upon them as a winter nights tale, from which to fetch matter of ſport and merriment. Laſtly, the firſt Chriſtians paid a veneration to, nay ſacrific'd their lives to reſcue their Bibles from the unworthy uſage of the heathens, and we our ſelves expoſe them to worſe: they would but have burnt them, we ſcorn and vilify them, and outvy even the perſecutors malice with our contemt. Theſe are miſerable antitheſes; yet this God knows is the caſe with too many. I wonder what

new ſtate of felicity hereafter theſe men have fancied to themſelves: for ſure they cannot think theſe retrograde ſteps can ever bring them ſo much as to the heathens Elyſium, much leſs the Chriſtians Heaven.

18. It will therefore concern thoſe who do not quite renounce their claim to that heaven, to conſider ſoberly, how inconſiſtent their practice is with thoſe hopes. A man may have a great eſtate conveyed to him; but if he will madly burn, or childiſhly make paper kites of his deeds, he forfeits his title with his evidence, and thoſe certainly that deal ſo with the conveiances of their eternal inheritance, will not ſpeed better. If they will thus dally and play with them, God will be as little in earneſt in the performance, as they are in the reception of the promiſes; nay he will take his turn of mocking too, and when their ſcene of mirth is over, his will begin. A dreadful menace of this we have, *Prov.* 1. 24. which deſerves to be ſet down at large, *Becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed, I have ſtretched out my hand, and no man regarded: but ye have ſet at nought all my counſel, and would none of my reproof,*

I

I alſo will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as deſolation, and your deſtruction cometh as a whirlwind: when diſtreſs and anguiſh cometh upon you, then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not anſwer, they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me. Would God I could as well tranſcribe this Text into mens hearts, and there would need no more to ſecure the whole Canon of Scripture from their profanation. Could men but look a little before them, and apprehend how in the days of their diſtreſs and agony, they will gaſp for thoſe comforts which they now turn into ridicule: they would not thus madly defeat themſelves, cut off their beſt and only reſerve, and with a pitiful contemt caſt away thoſe cordials, which will then be the only ſupport of their fainting ſpirits. As for thoſe who deride Scripture upon *atheiſtical* grounds, all I ſhall ſay is to refer to what I have ſaid in the beginning of this Section; they had need be very well aſſured that foundation be not ſandy: for if it be, this reproching Gods word will be a conſiderable addition to the guilt of all their other hoſtility, and

how jolly ſoever they ſeem at preſent, it may be when that queſtion they are ſo willing to take for granted, is by death drawing near a deciſion, ſome of their confidence will retire, and leave them in an amazed expectation of ſomewhat, which they are ſure cannot be good for them, who have ſo ill provided for it. Then perhaps their merry vein will fail them, and not their infidelity, but their deſpair may keep them from invocating that Power they have ſo long derided. 'Tis certain it has ſo happened with ſome: for as practical, ſo ſpeculative wickedneſs, has uſually another aſpect, when it ſtands in the ſhadow of death, than in the dazling beams of health and vigor. It would therefore be wiſdom before hand to draw it out of this deceitful light, and by ſober ſerious thoughts place it as near as may be in thoſe circumſtances in which 'twill then appear: and then ſure to hearts that are not wholly petrified, 'twill ſeem ſafer to own a God early and upon choice, than late and upon compulſion.

19. HOWEVER if they will not yield themſelves Homagers, yet the mere poſſiblity of their being in the wrong, ſhould

ſhould methinks perſwade them at leaſt to be civil adverſaries. A generous man will not purſue even a falling enemy with revilings and reproch, much leſs will a wiſe man do it to one who is in any the leaſt probability of revenging it: it being a received maxim, That there is no greater folly than for a man to let his tongue betray him to miſchief. Let it therefore in this caſe at leaſt ſtand neuter, that if by their words they be not juſtified, yet by their words they may not be condemned. They can be no loſers by it: for at the utmoſt, 'tis but keeping in a little unſavory breath, which (ſuppoſing no God to be offended with it) is yet nauſeous to all thoſe men who believe there is one. To thoſe indeed who have a zeal for their faith, there can be no diſcourſe ſo intolerable, ſo diſobliging: it turns converſation into skirmiſhing, and perpetual diſputes. The Egyptians were ſo zealous for their brutiſh deities, that *Moſes* preſumed the Iſraelites ſacrificing of thoſe beaſts they adored, muſt needs ſet them in an uproar, *Exod.* 8. 26. And ſure thoſe who do acknowledg a divine power, cannot contentedly ſit by to hear him blaſphemed. 'Tis true there

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are ſome ſo cool, that they are of the ſame mind for God, that *Gideon*'s father was for *Baal*, Judg. 6. 31. *Let him plead for himſelf*, they will not appear in his defence; yet even theſe have a ſecret conſciouſneſs, that they ought to do ſo, and therefore have ſome uneaſineſs in being put to the Teſt: ſo that it cannot be a pleaſant entertainment even for them. And therefore thoſe who have no fear of God to reſtrain them, ſhould methinks, unleſs they be perfectly of the temper of the unjuſt judge, *Luke* 18. 2. in reſpect of men abſtain from all ſorts of impious diſcourſe; and at leaſt be civil, tho they will not be pious.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

Of Detraction.

WE have ſeen in the laſt Section the inſolence of the Tongue towards God; and ſure we cannot expect it ſhould pay more reverence to men. If there be thoſe that dare *ſtretch their mouths againſt heaven*, Pſal. 73. 9. we are not to wonder if there be more that will *ſhoot their arrows, even bitter words*, againſt the beſt on earth, Pſal. 64. 3. I ſhall not attemt to ranſack the whole quiver, by ſhewing every particular ſort of verbal injuries which relate to our neighbors, but rather chuſe out ſome few which either for the extraordinarineſs of their guilt, or the frequency of their practice are the moſt eminent. I begin with *Detraction*, in which both thoſe qualities concur: for as in ſome inſtances 'tis one of the higheſt ſins, ſo in the general 'tis certainly one of the moſt common, and by being ſo becomes inſen-

ſenſible. This vice (above all others) ſeems to have maintained not only its empire, but its reputation too. Men are not yet convinced heartily that it is a ſin, or if any, not of ſo deep a die, or ſo wide an extent as indeed it is. They have, if not falſe, yet imperfect notions of it, and by not knowing how far its circle reaches, do often like young conjurers ſtep beyond the limits of their ſafety.

THIS I am the apter to believe, becauſe I ſee ſome degree of this fault cleave to thoſe, who have eminently corrected all other exorbitancies of the tongue. Many who would ſtartle at an oath, whoſe ſtomachs as well as conſciences recoil at an obſcenity, do yet ſlide glibly into a *Detraction*: which yet methinks perſons otherwiſe of ſtrict converſations ſhould not do frequently and habitually, had not their eaſy thoughts of the guilt ſmoothed the way to it.

IT may therefore be no unkind attempt, to try to diſ-entangle from this ſnare by diſplaying it; ſhewing the whole contexture of the ſin, how 'tis woven with threds of different ſizes, yet the leaſt of them ſtrong enough to nooze

and intrap us. And alas! if Satan fetter us, 'tis indifferent to him whether it be by a cable or a hair. Nay perhaps the ſmalleſt ſins are his greateſt ſtratagems. The finer his line is ſpun, the leſs ſhadow it caſts, and is leſs apt to fright us from the hook: and tho there be much odds between a talent of lead and a grain of ſand, yet thoſe grains may be accumulated till they out-weigh the talent. It was a good reply of *Plato*'s, to one who murmured at his reproving him for a ſmall matter, *Cuſtom* ſaies he, *is no ſmall matter.* And indeed ſuppoſing any ſin were ſo ſmall as we are willing to fancy moſt, yet an indulgent habit even of that would be certainly ruinous: that indulgence being perfectly oppoſite to the love of God, which better can conſiſt with the indeliberate commiſſions of many ſins, than with an allowed perſiſtance in any one.

BUT in this matter of *Detraction* I cannot yield that any is ſmall, ſave only comparatively with ſome other of the ſame kind which is greater: for abſolutely conſidered, there is even in the very loweſt degrees of it, a flat contradiction to the grand rule of charity,

the loving our neighbour as our ſelves. And ſurely that which at once violates the ſum of the whole ſecond Table of the Law (for ſo our Saviour renders it, *Mat.* 22. 40.) muſt be lookt on as no trifling inconſiderable guilt. To evidence this I ſhall in the anatomizing this ſin apply this rule to every part of it: firſt conſider it in groſs, in its entire body, and after deſcend to its ſeveral limbs.

1. DETRACTION in the native importance of the word, ſignifies the withdrawing or taking off from a thing? and as it is applied to reputation, it denotes the impairing or leſſening a man in point of fame, rendring him leſs valued and eſteemed by others, which is the final aim of *Detraction*, tho purſued by various means.

2. THIS is juſtly lookt on as one of the moſt unkind deſigns one man can have upon another, there being implanted in every mans nature a great tenderneſs of reputation: and to be careleſs of it, is lookt on as a mark of a degenerous mind. On which account *Solon* in his laws preſumes, that he that will ſell his own fame, will alſo ſell the public

lic intereſt. 'Tis true, many have improved this too far, blown up this native ſpark into ſuch flames of ambition, as has ſet the world in a combuſtion; ſuch as *Alexander*, *Cæſar*, and others, who ſacrificed hecatombs to their fame, fed it up to a prodigy upon a *Canibal* diet, the fleſh of men: yet even theſe exceſſes ſerve to evince the univerſal conſent of mankind, that reputation is a valuable and deſirable thing.

3. NOR have we only the ſuffrage of man, but the atteſtation of God himſelf, who frequently in ſcripture gives teſtimony to it: *A good name is better then great riches*, Prov. 22. 1. And again, *A good name is better then precious ointment.* Eccleſ. 7. 1. And the more to recommend it, he propoſes it as a reward to piety and vertue, as he menaces the contrary to wickedneſs; *The memory of the juſt ſhall be bleſſed, but the name of the wicked ſhall rot.* Prov. 10. 7. And that we may not think this an invitation fitted only to the Jewiſh œconomy, the Apoſtle goes farther, and propoſes the endeavour after it as a duty, *whatſoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue,*

and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things, Phil. 4. 8.

4. And accordingly good men have in their eſtimate ranked their names in the next degree to their ſouls, preferr'd them before goods or life. Indeed 'tis that which gives us an inferior ſort of immortality, and makes us even in this world ſurvive our ſelves. This part of us alone continues verdant in the grave, and yields a perfume, when we are ſtench and rottenneſs: the conſideration whereof hath ſo prevailed with the more generous heathens, that they have cheerfully quitted life in contemplation of it. Thus *Epaminondas* alacriouſly expired, in confidence that he left behind him a perpetual memory of the victories he had atchieved for his country. *Brutus* ſo courted the fame of a Patriot, that he brake thro all the obſtacles of gratitude and humanity to attain it: he cheerfully bare the defeat of his attemt, in contemplation of the glory of it. 'Twere endleſs to recount the ſtories of the *Codri*, *Decii*, and *Curtii*, with the train of thoſe noble Heroes, who in behalf of their countries devoted themſelves to certain death.

5. But we need no forreign *mediums* to

to diſcover the value of a good name: let every man weigh it but in his own ſcales, retire to his breaſt, and there reflect on that impatience he has when his own repute is invaded. To what dangers, to what guilts do's ſometimes the mere fancy of a reproch hurry men? It makes them really forfeit that virtue from whence all true reputation ſprings, and like *Eſop*'s dog loſe the ſubſtance by too greedy catching at the ſhadow: an irrefragable proof how great a price they ſet upon their fame.

6. AND then ſince reaſon ſets it at ſo high a rate, and paſſion at an higher, we may conclude the violating this intereſt, one of the greateſt injuries in human commerce; ſuch as is reſented not only by the raſh, but the ſober: ſo that we muſt pick out only blocks and ſtones, the ſtupid and inſenſible part of mankind, if we think we can inflict this wound without an afflictive ſmart. And tho the power of Chriſtianity do's in ſome ſo moderate this reſentment, that none of theſe blows ſhall recoile, no degree of revenge be attemted; yet that do's not at all juſtify or excuſe the inflicter. It may indeed be an uſeful trial

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of the patience, and meekneſs of the defamed, yet the defamer has not the leſs either of crime or danger: not of crime, for that is rather enhanced than abated by the goodneſs of the perſon injur'd; nor of danger, ſince God is the more immediate avenger of thoſe who attemt not to be their own. But if the injury meet not with this meekneſs (as in this vindictive age it is manifold odds it will not) it then acquires another accumulative guilt, ſtands anſwerable not only for its own poſitive ill, but for all the accidental which it cauſes in the ſufferer, who by this means is rob'd not only of his repute, but his innocence alſo, provoked to thoſe unchriſtian returns, which draw God alſo into the enmity, and ſet him at once at war with heaven and earth. And tho as to his immediate judgment, he muſt bear his iniquity, anſwer for his impatience: yet as in all Civil inſurrections the ring-leader is lookt on with a peculiar ſeverity, ſo doubtleſs in this caſe, the firſt provoker has by his ſeniority and primogeniture a double portion of the guilt, and may conſequently expect of the puniſhment, according to the doom of our Savior, *woe*

be

be to that man by whom the offence cometh, Matth. 18. 7.

7. INDEED there is ſuch a train of miſchiefs which uſually follow this ſin, that 'tis ſcarce poſſible to make a full eſtimate of its malignity. 'Tis one of the grand incendiaries which diſturbs the peace of the world, and has a great ſhare in moſt of its quarrels. For could we examine all the feuds which harraſs perſons, families, nay ſometimes nations too, we ſhould find the greater part take their riſe from injurious reprochful words, and that for one which is commenced upon the intuition of any real conſiderable intereſt, there are many which owe their being to this licentiouſneſs of the tongue.

8. IN regard therefore of its proper guilt, and all thoſe remoter ſins and miſeries which enſue it, 'tis every mans great concern to watch over himſelf. Neither is it leſs in reſpect both of that univerſal aptneſs we have to this ſin, and its being ſo perpetually at hand; that for others we muſt attend occaſions and convenient ſeaſons, but the opportunities of this are alwaies ready: I can do my neighbor this injury, when I can do him no other. Beſides the multitude of objects do proportionably

tionably multiply both the poſſibilities and incitations; and the objects here are as numerous, as there are perſons in the world I either know, or have heard of. For tho ſome ſort of *Detractions* ſeem confined to thoſe to whom we bear particular malice, yet there are other kinds of it more ranging, which fly indifferently at all. Laſtly this ſin has the aid almoſt of univerſal example, which is an advantage beyond all the others; there being ſcarce any inſinuation ſo irreſiſtable as the practice of thoſe with whom we converſe, and no ſubject of converſe ſo common as the defaming our neighbours.

9. SINCE then the path is ſo ſlippery, it had not need be dark too. Let us then take in the beſt light we can, and attentively view this ſin in its ſeveral branches, that by a diſtinct diſcovery of the divers acts and degrees of it, we may the better be armed againſt them all.

SECT.

SECT. V.

Of Lying Defamation.

1. DETRACTION being (as we have already ſaid) the leſſning and impairing a man in his repute, we may reſolve, that what ever conduces to that end, is properly a Detraction. I ſhall begin with that which is moſt eminent, the ſpreading of *defamatory* reports. Theſe may be of two kinds, either falſe, or true; which tho they ſeem to be of very different complexions, yet may ſpring from the ſame ſtock, and drive at the ſame deſign. Let us firſt conſider of the falſe.

2. AND this admits of various circumſtances. Sometimes a man invents a perfect falſity of another: ſometimes he that do's not invent it, yet reports it, tho he knows it to be falſe: and a third ſort there are, who having not certain knowledge whether it be falſe or no, do yet divulge it as an abſolute certainty, or at

leaſt with ſuch artificial inſinuations, as may biaſs the hearer on that hand. The former of theſe is a crime of ſo high, ſo diſingenuous a nature, that tho many are vile enough to commit it, none are ſo impudent as to avow it. Even in this age of inſulting vice, when almoſt all other wickedneſs appears bare-fac'd, this is fain to keep on the vizard. No man will own himſelf a falſe accuſer: for if modeſty do not reſtrain him, yet his very malice will; ſince to confeſs would be to defeat his deſign. Indeed it is of all other ſins the moſt diabolical, it being a conjunction of two of Satans moſt eſſential properties, Malice and Lying. We know 'tis his peculiar title to be *the accuſer of the brethren*: and when we tranſcribe his copy, we alſo aſſume his nature, intitle our ſelves to a deſcent from him, *Ye are of your father the devil*, Joh. 8. 44. We are by it render'd a ſort of *Incubus* brats, the infamous progenies of the lying ſpirit. It is indeed a ſin of ſo groſs, ſo formidable a bulk, that there needs no help of optics to render it diſcernible, and therefore I need not further expatiate on it.

3. The next degree is not much ſhort

ſhort of it; what it wants is rather of invention than malice: for he that will ſo adopt anothers lie, ſhews he would willingly have bin its proper father. It do's indeed differ no more than the maker of adulterate wares do's from the vender of them: and certainly there cannot be a more ignominious trade, than the being huckſters to ſuch vile merchandize. Neither is the ſin leſs than the baſeneſs: we find the *Lover* of a lie ranked in an equal form of guilt with the *Maker*, *Rev.* 21. And ſurely he muſt be preſumed to love it, that can deſcend to be the broker to it, help it to paſs current in the world.

4. THE third ſort of *Detractors* look a little more demurely, and with the woman in the *Proverbs*, Chap. 30. *wipe their mouths, and ſay they have done no wickedneſs.* They do not certainly know the falſity of what they report, and their ignorance muſt ſerve them as an amulet againſt the guilt both of deceit and malice: but I fear it will do neither. For firſt perhaps they are affectedly ignorant: they are ſo willing it ſhould be true, that they have not attemted to examine it. But ſecondly it do's not

ſuffice that I do not know the falſity; for to make me a true ſpeaker, 'tis neceſſary I know the truth of what I affirm. Nay if the thing were never ſo true, yet if I knew it not to be ſo, its truth will not ſecure me from being a liar: and therefore whoever endeavours to have that receiv'd for a certainty, which himſelf knows not to be ſo, offends againſt truth. The utmoſt that can conſiſt with ſincerity, is to repreſent it to others as doubtful as it appears to him. Yet even that how conſonant ſoever to truth, is not to Charity. Even doubtful accuſations leave a ſtain behind them, and often prove indelible injuries to the party accuſed: how much more then do the more poſitive and confident aſperſions we have hitherto ſpoken of? Let me add only this concerning this later ſort, that they are greater advancers of *defamatory* deſigns, than the very firſt contrivers. For thoſe upon a conſciouſneſs of their falſeneſs are obliged to proceed cautiouſly, to pick out the credulous and leaſt diſcerning perſons, on whom to impoſe their fictions, and dare not produce them in all companies for fear of detection: but theſe in confidence that the untruth (if it be

be one) lies not at their door, ſpeak it without any reſtraint in all places, at all times; and what the others are fain to whiſper, they proclaime; like our new engine, which pretends to convey a whiſper many miles off. So that as in the caſe of ſtealing 'tis proverbially ſaid, that if there were no receivers there would be no thieves; ſo in this of Slander, if there were fewer ſpreaders, there would be fewer forgers of libels: the manufacture would be diſcouraged, if it had not theſe retailers to put off the wares.

5. Now to apply theſe practices to our rule of duty, there will need no very cloſe inſpection to diſcern the obliquity. The moſt ſuperficial glance will evidence theſe ſeveral degrees of Slanderers to do what they would not be willing to ſuffer. Who among them can be content to be falſly aſperſed? Nay ſo far are they from that, that let but the ſhadow of their own calumny reflect on themſelves, let any but truly tell them that they have falſly accuſed others, they grow raving and impatient, like a dog at a looking glaſs, fiercely combating that image which himſelf creates: and how ſmoothly ſoever the original lie

ſlides

ſlides from them, the echo of it grates their ears. And indeed 'tis obſervable, that thoſe who make the greateſt havock of other mens reputation, are the moſt nicely tender of their own; which ſets this ſin of Calumny in a moſt diametrical oppoſition to the evangelical precept of *loving our neighbours as our ſelves.*

6. THUS much is diſcernable even in the ſurface of the crime: but if we look deeper and examine the motives, we ſhall find the foundation well agrees to the ſuperſtructure; they being uſually one of theſe two, *Malice* or *Intereſt.* And indeed the thing is ſo diſingenuous, ſo contrary to the dictates of humanity as well as divinity, that I muſt in reverence to our common nature, preſume it muſt be ſome very forcible impellent, that can drive a man ſo far from himſelf. The devil here playes the artiſt: and as the fatalleſt poiſons to man are (they ſay) drawn from humane bodies, ſo here he extracts the venim of our iraſcible and concupiſcible part, and in it dips thoſe arrows, which we thus ſhoot at one another.

7. 'TIS needleſs to harangue ſeverally upon each. The world too experimentally

tally knows the force of both. *Malice* is that whirlwind, which has ſhook ſtates and families, no leſs than private perſons; a paſſion ſo impetuous and precipitate, that it often equally involves the agent and the patient: a malicious man being of like violence with thoſe who flung in the three children, *Dan.* 3. conſumed by thoſe flames into which he caſts others. As for *Intereſt*, 'tis that univerſal monarch to which all other empires are tributaries, to which men ſacrifice not only their conſciences and innocence, but (what is uſually much dearer) their ſenſualities and vices. Thoſe whom all the divine (either) threats or promiſes, cannot perſwade to mortify, nay but reſtrain one luſt; at *Mammon*'s beck will diſclaime many, and force their inclinations to comply with their *Intereſt*.

8. AND whilſt this ſin of Calumny has two ſuch potent abettors, we are not to wonder at its growth: as long as men are malicious and deſigning, they will be traducing; thoſe *Cyclop*'s will be perpetually forging thunderbolts, againſt which no innocence or virtue can be proof. And alas! we daily find too great

great effect of their induſtry. But tho theſe are the forgers of the more ſolemn deliberate Calumnies, yet this ſportive age hath produced another ſort; there being men that *defame* others by way of divertiſement, invent little ſtories that they may find themſelves exerciſe, and the town talk. This, if it muſt paſs for ſport, is ſuch as *Solomon* deſcribes, *Prov.* 26. 18, 19. *As a mad man that caſteth firebrands, arrows and death, ſo is he that deceiveth his neighbour, and ſaith, am not I in ſport?* He that ſhoots an arrow in jeſt, may kill a man in earneſt; and he that gives himſelf liberty to play with his neighbours fame, may ſoon play it away. Moſt men have ſuch an aptneſs to entertain ſiniſter opinions of others, that they greedily draw in any ſuggeſtion of that kind; and one may as eaſily perſwade the thirſty earth to refund the water ſhe has ſuckt into her veins, as them to depoſite a prejudice they have once taken up. Therefore ſuch experiments upon fame, are as dangerous as that which *Alexander* is ſaid to have made of the force of *Naphtha* upon his Page, from which he ſcarce eſcaped with life. Theſe jocular ſlanders are often as miſchie-

miſchievous as thoſe of deeper deſign, and have from the ſlightneſs of the temtation an enhancement of guilt. For ſure he that can put ſuch an intereſt of his neighbours in balance with a little fit of laughter, ſets it at a lower price than he that hopes to enrich or advance himſelf by it: and tho it paſs among ſome for a ſpecimen of wit, yet it really liſts them among *Solomon*'s fools, who *make a mock at ſin*, Prov. 14. 9. In the mean time ſince ſlander is a plant that can grow in all ſoils, ſince the frolick humor as well as the moroſe betrays to the guilt, who can hope to eſcape this *ſcourge of the tongue*, as the Wiſeman calls it, *Eccl.* 26. 6. which communicates with all? Perſons of all ranks do mutually aſperſe, and are aſperſed: ſo that he who would not have his credulity abuſed, has ſcarce a ſecurer way, than (like that Aſtrologer, who made his almanack give a tolerable account of the weather by a direct inverſion of the common prognoſticators,) to let his belief run quite counter to reports. Yet ſo epidemic is this diſeaſe grown, that even religion (at leaſt thoſe parties and factions which aſſume that name) has got

a taint of it; each ſect or opinion ſeeking to repreſent its antagoniſt as odious as it can. And whilſt they contend for ſpeculative truth, they by mutual calumnies forfeit the practic: a thing that juſtly excites the grief of good men, to ſee that thoſe who all pretend to the ſame Chriſtianity, ſhould only be unanimous in the violating that truth and charity it preſcribes.

10. And if theſe be the weapons of our ſpiritual warfare, what may we think of the carnal? How are our ſecular animoſities purſued, when our ſpeculations are thus managed? How eaſily do we run down the reputation of any who ſtand in the way either of our ſpleen or avarice? When *Joſeph*'s reſolute purity had chang'd the ſcene of his miſtreſſes paſſion, ſhe do's as readily ſhift that of guilt too, and fixes her crime upon him, *Gen.* 39. 14. So when *Ziba* had a mind to undermine *Mephiboſheth* in his eſtate, he firſt practiſes upon his fame in a falſe accuſation, 2 *Sam.* 16. 3. And alas how familiarly do we now ſee both theſe ſcenes reacted! Thoſe who will not take vice into their boſoms, ſhall yet have it beſpatter their faces: they who will not run

to

to the ſame exceſs of riot, muſt expect to be evil ſpoken of, 1 *Pet.* 4. 4. Nay not only pious men, but piety it ſelf partakes of the ſame fate, falls under the two edg'd ſlander both of deceit and folly. And if men cannot be permitted quietly to enjoy their piety, much leſs will they thoſe things whereof the world hath more guſt, I mean ſecular advantages. There are ſtill crimes to be diſcovered in the poſſeſſors of honours or eſtates, and they wonderfully excite the zeal of them who would ſupplant them. What artifices are there to make them appear unworthy of what they have, that others more unworthy may ſucceed them? Nor are theſe ſtorms only in the upper region, in the higher ranks of men; but if we paſs thro all degrees, we ſhall find the difference is rather in the value of the things, than in the means of purſuing them. He that pretends to the meaneſt office do's as ſtudiouſly diſparage his competitor, as he that is rival'd for a kingdom. Nay even he that has but a merry humor to gratify, makes no ſcruple to do it with the loſs of another man's reputation.

11. THUS do we accommodate every petty temporal intereſt at the coſt of our eternal: and as an unskilful Fencer, whilſt he is purſuing his thruſt, expoſes his body; ſo whilſt we thus actuate our own malice, we abandon our ſelves to Satans, receive mortal wounds from him, only that we may give a few light ſcratches to one another. For as I have before ſaid, there is nothing do's more ſecure his title to us, than this vice of Calumny, it bearing his proper impreſs and figure. And we may fear *Chriſt* will one day make the ſame judgment of perſons as he did of coin, and award them to him whoſe *image and ſuperſcription* they bear, Matth. 22. 20.

12. AND now how great a madneſs is it to make coſtly oblations to ſo vile an idol? This is indeed the worſhipping our own imaginations, preferring a malicious fiction before a real felicity: and is but faintly reſembled by him, who is ſaid to have choſen to part with his Biſhopric, rather than burn his *Romance*. Alas are there not groſs corporal ſins enough to ruine us, but muſt we have aërial ones too, damn our ſelves with chimeras, and by theſe forgeries of our brains

brains dream our ſelves to deſtruction!

13. LET all thoſe then who thus unhappily employ their inventive faculty, timely conſider, how unthriving a trade 'tis finally like to prove; that all their falſe accuſations of others will rebound in true ones upon themſelves. It do's often ſo in this world, where many times the moſt clandeſtine contrivances of this kind meet with detection. Or if they ſhould happen to keep on the diſguiſe here, yet 'twill infallibly be torn off at the great day of manifeſtation, when before God, Angels, and Men, they will be render'd infinitely more vile, than 'twas poſſible for them here to make others.

SECT.

Sect. VI.

Of Uncharitable Truth.

1. IN the next place we are to conſider of the other branch of Defamatory reports, viz. ſuch as are true: which tho they muſt be confeſt to be of a lower form of guilt than the former, yet as to the kind, they equally agree in the definition of *Detraction*, ſince 'tis poſſible to impair a man's credit by true reports as well as by falſe.

2. To clear this I ſhall firſt obſerve, that altho every fault hath ſome penal effects which are coetaneous to the act, yet this of Infamy is not ſo: this is a more remote conſequent; that which it immediatly depends upon, is the publiſhing. A man may do things which to God and his own conſcience render him abominable, and yet keep his reputation with men: but when this ſtifled crime breaks out, when his ſecret guilts are detected, then, and not till then, he becomes infamous: ſo that altho his ſin be the

the material, yet it is the diſcovery that is the formal cauſe of his Infamy.

3. THIS being granted, it follows that he that divulges an unknown concealed fault, ſtands accountable for all the conſequences that flow from that divulging; but whether accountable as for guilt, muſt be determined by the particular circumſtances of the cauſe. So that here we muſt admit of an exception: for tho every diſcovery of anothers fault be in the ſtrict natural ſenſe of the word a *Detraction*, yet it will not alwayes be the ſin of *Detraction*, becauſe in ſome inſtances there may ſome higher obligation intervene, and ſuperſede that we ow to the fame of our neighbour; and in thoſe caſes it may not only be lawful, but neceſſary to expoſe him.

4. Now all ſuch caſes I conceive may ſummarily be reduced to two heads, Juſtice and Charity. Firſt as to Juſtice: that we know is a fundamental vertue, and he that ſhall violate that, to abound in another, is as abſurd, as he that undermines the foundation to raiſe the walls. We are not to ſteal to give alms, and God himſelf hath declared that he hates robbery for a burnt-offering: ſo that no pretence

pretence either of Charity or Piety can abſolve us from the duty we owe to Juſtice. Now it may often fall out, that by concealing one mans fault, I may be injurious to another, nay to a whole community: and then I aſſume the guilt I conceal, and by the laws both of God and man am judged an acceſſory.

5. And as juſtice to others enforces, ſo ſometimes juſtice to a mans ſelf allows the publiſhing of a fault, when a conſiderable intereſt either of fame or fortune cannot otherwiſe be reſcued. But to make loud out-cries of injury, when they tend nothing to the repreſs of it, is a liberty rather aſſumed by rage and impatience, than authorized by juſtice. Nay often in that caſe the complainer is the moſt injurious perſon; for he inflicts more than he ſuffers, and in lieu of ſome trivial right of his which is invaded, he aſſaults the other in a nearer intereſt, by wounding him in his good name: but if the cauſe be conſiderable and the manner regular, there lies ſure no obligation upon any man to wrong himſelf, to indulge to another.

6. Neither do's Charity retrench

this liberty: for tho it be one act of Charity to conceal another mans faults, yet ſometimes it may be inconſiſtent with ſome more important Charity, which I owe to a third perſon, or perhaps to a multitude; as in thoſe caſes wherein public benefit is concern'd. If this were not allowable, no hiſtory could lawfully be written, ſince if true, it cannot but recount the faults of many: no evidence could be brought in againſt a malefactor: and indeed all diſcipline would be ſubverted; which would be ſo great a miſchief, that Charity obliges to prevent it, what *Defamation* ſoever fall upon the guilty by it. For in ſuch inſtances 'tis a true rule, that mercy to the evil proves cruelty to the innocent. And as in a competition of miſchiefs we are to chuſe the leaſt, ſo of two goods the greateſt, and the more extenſive, is the moſt eligible.

7. NAY even that Charity which reflects upon my ſelf, may alſo ſometimes ſuperſede that to my neighbour, the rule obliging me to love him as, not better than, my ſelf. I need not ſure ſilently aſſent to my own juſt *Defamation* for fear of proving another a falſe accuſer,

nor ſuffer my ſelf to be made a begger, to conceal another mans being a thief. 'Tis true in a great inequality of intereſts, Charity (whoſe character it is, *not to ſeek her own* 1 Cor. 13. 5.) will promt me to prefer a greater concern of my neighbours before a ſlight one of my own: but in equal circumſtances I am ſure at liberty to be kind firſt to my ſelf. If I will recede even from that, I may; but that is then to be accounted among the heroic flights of Charity, not her binding and indiſpenſable Laws.

8. HAVING now ſet the boundaries to the excepted caſes; as all inſtances within them will be legitimated, ſo all without them will (by the known rule of exceptions) be precluded, and fall under that general duty we owe to our neighbour, of tendring his credit: an obligation ſo univerſally infringed, that 'tis not imaginable the breach ſhould alwaies happen within the excepted caſes. When 'tis remembred how unactive the principles of Juſtice and Charity are now grown in the world, we muſt certainly impute ſuch inceſſant effects, to ſome more vigorous cauſes: of which it

may

may not be amiſs to point out ſome of the moſt obvious, and leave every man to examine which of them he finds moſt operative in himſelf.

9. IN the firſt place I may reckon *Pride*, an humor which as it is alwaies mounting, ſo it will make uſe of any foot-ſtool towards its riſe. A man who affects an extraordinary ſplendor of reputation, is glad to find any foils to ſet him off; and therefore will let no fault nor folly of anothers enjoy the ſhade, but brings it into the open light, that by that compariſon his own excellencies may appear the brighter. I dare appeal to the breaſt of any proud man, whether he do not upon ſuch occaſions, delight to make ſome Phariſaical reflections on himſelf, whether he be not apt to ſay, *I am not like other men, or as this publican*, Luke 18. tho probably he leave out the *God I thank thee*. Now he that cheriſhes ſuch reſentments as theſe in himſelf, will doubtleſs be willing to propagate them to other men; and to that end render the blemiſhes of others as viſible as he can. But this betraies a degenerous ſpirit, which from a conſciouſneſs that he wants ſolid worth, on which to

bottom a reputation, is fain to found it on the ruines of other mens. The true Diamond ſparkles even in the ſun-ſhine: 'tis but a glow-worm virtue, that ows its luſtre to the darkneſs about it.

10. ANOTHER promter to *Detraction* is *Envy*, which ſometimes is particular, ſometimes general. He that has a pique to another, would have him as hateful to all mankind as he is to him; and therefore as he grieves and repines at any thing that may advance his eſtimation, ſo he exults and triumphs when any thing occurs which may depreſs it, and is uſually very induſtrious to improve the opportunity, nay has a ſtrange ſagacity in hunting it out. No vulture do's more quickly ſcent a carcaſs, than an envious perſon do's thoſe *dead flies* which corrupt his neighbours ointment Eccleſ. 10. 1. the vapor whereof his hate, like a ſtrong wind, ſcatters and diſperſes far and near. Nor needs he any great crime to practice on: every little infirmity or paſſion, lookt on thro his opticks appears a mountainous guilt. He can improve the leaſt ſpeck or freckle into a leproſy, which ſhall overſpread the whole man: and a cloud no *bigger than*

than a mans hand, like that of *Eliſha*, 1 King. 18. 44. may in an inſtant, with the help of prejudice, grow to the utter darkning of the brighteſt reputation, and fill the whole horizon with tempeſt and horror. Sometimes this Envy is general, not confin'd to any mans perſon, but diffuſed to the whole nature. Some tempers there are ſo malign, that they wiſh ill to all, and believe ill of all; like *Timon* the Athenian, who profeſt himſelf an univerſal man-hater. He whoſe guilty conſcience reflects diſmal images of himſelf; is willing to put the ſame ugly ſhape upon the whole nature, and to conclude that all men are the ſame, were they but cloſely inſpected. And therefore when he can ſee but the leaſt glimmering of a fault in any, he takes it as a proof of his Hypotheſis, and with an envious joy calls in as many ſpectators as he can. 'Tis certain there are ſome in whoſe ears nothing ſounds ſo harſh as the commendation of another, as on the contrary nothing is ſo melodious as a *Defamation*. *Plutarch* gives an apt inſtance of this upon *Ariſtides*'s baniſhment, whom when a mean perſon had propos'd to Oſtraciſm, being askt what

what diſpleaſure *Ariſtides* had done him, he replied, *None, neither do I know him, but it grieves me to hear every body call him a juſt man.* I fear ſome of our keeneſt accuſers now a dayes may give the ſame anſwer. No man that is eminent for piety (or indeed but moral virtue) but he ſhall have many inſidious eyes upon him *watching for his halting*: and if any the leaſt obliquity can be eſpied, he is uſed worſe than the vileſt malefactor: for ſuch are tried but at one bar, and know the utmoſt of their doom; but theſe are arraigned at every table, in every Tavern. And at ſuch variety of Judicatures, there will be as great variety of ſentences; only they commonly concur in this one, that he is an Hypocrite, and then what complacency, what triumph have they in ſuch a diſcovery? There is not half ſo much Epicuriſm in any of their moſt ſtudied luxuries, no ſpectacle affords them ſo much pleaſure, as a bleeding fame thus lying at their mercy.

11. ANOTHER ſort of *Detractors* there are, whoſe deſigns are not ſo black, but are equally mean and ſordid, much too light to be put in ballance with

with a neighbours Credit. Of thoſe ſome will pick up all the little ſtories they can get, to humor a Patron: an artifice well known by thoſe trencher-gueſts, who, like rats, ſtill haunt the beſt proviſions. Theſe men do almoſt come up to a literal ſenſe of what the *Pſalmiſt* ſpake in a figurative, Pſalm 14. *and eat up people for bread*, tear and worry men in their good names, that themſelves may eat. It was a curſe denounced againſt *Eli*'s off-ſpring, *that they ſhould come and crouch for a morſel of bread*, 1 Sam. 2. 36. But ſuch men court this as a preferment, and to bring themſelves within the reach of it, ſtick not to aſſume that vileſt office of common Delators. There are others who when they have got the knowledge of another mans fault, think it an endearing thing to whiſper it in the ear of ſome friend or confident. But ſure if they muſt needs ſacrifice ſome ſecret to their friendſhip, they ſhould take *Davids* rule, and *not offer that which coſt them nothing.* If they will expreſs their confidence, let them acquaint them with their own private crimes. That indeed would ſhow ſomthing of truſt: but thoſe experiments upon

upon another mans coſt, will hardly convince any conſidering perſon of their kindneſs.

12. THERE ſtill remains a yet more trifling ſort of *defamers*, who have no deliberate deſign which they purſue in it, yet are aſſiduous in the trade as the deeper contrivers. Such are thoſe who publiſh their neighbours failings as they read *Gazetts*, only that they may be telling News: an itch wherewith ſome peoples tongues are ſtrangly over-run, who can as well hold a glowing coal in their mouths, as keep any thing they think new; nay will ſometimes run themſelves out of breath, for fear leſt any ſhould ſerve them as *Ahimaaz* did *Cuſhi*, 2 Sam. 18. 23. and tell the tale before them. This is one of the moſt childiſh vanities imaginable: and ſure men muſt have ſouls of a very low level, that can think it a commenſurate entertainment. Others there are who uſe *defamatory* diſcourſe, neither for the love of news, nor *defamation*, but purely for love of talk: whoſe ſpeech like a flowing current bears away indiſcriminately whatever lies in its way. And indeed ſuch inceſſant talkers, are uſually

people, not of depth enough to ſupply themſelves out of their own ſtore, and therefore can let no foreign acceſſion paſs by them; no more than the mill which is alwaies going, can afford any waters to run waſte. I know we uſe to call this Talkativeneſs a feminine vice; but to ſpeak impartially, I think, tho we have given them the incloſure of the ſcandal, they have not of the fault, and he that ſhall appropriate loquacity to women, may perhaps ſometimes need to light *Diogenes*'s candle to ſeek a man: for 'tis poſſible to go into maſculine company, where 'twill be as hard to edge in a word, as at a female goſſiping. However as to this particular of *defaming*, both the ſexes ſeem to be at a vie: and I think he were a very critical judge, that could determine between them.

13. NOW leſt this latter ſort of *defamers* ſhould be apt to abſolve themſelves, as men of harmleſs intentions, I ſhall deſire them to conſider, that they are only more impertinent, not leſs injurious. For tho it be granted, that the proud and envious are to make a diſtinct account for their pride and envy;

yet as far as relates to their neighbour, they are equally miſchievous. *Anacreon* that was choked with a grape-ſtone, died as ſurely as *Julius Ceſar* with his three and twenty wounds; and a mans reputation may be as well fool'd and prattled away, as maliciouſly betraied. Nay perhaps more eaſily; for where the ſpeaker can leaſt be ſuſpected of deſign, the hearer is apter to give him credit: this way of inſinuating by familiar diſcourſe, being like thoſe poiſons that are taken in at the pores, which are the moſt inſenſibly ſucked in, and the moſt impoſſible to expel.

14. BUT we need not diſpute which is worſt, ſince 'tis certain all are bad, none of them (or any that hold proportion with them) being at all able to pretend their warrant either from juſtice or charity, and then what our Saviour ſayes in another caſe will be appliable to this, *He that is not for* us *is againſt* us, Mat. 12. 30. He that in publiſhing his neighbours faults, acts not upon the dictates of juſtice or charity, acts directly in contradiction to them: for where they do not upon ſome particular reſpects command, they do implicitly

plicitly and generally forbid all ſuch diſcoveries.

15. FOR firſt if a fault divulged be of a light nature, the offender cannot thereby merit ſo much, as to be made a public diſcourſe. Fame is a tender thing, and ſeldom is toſt and bandied without receiving ſome bruiſe, if not a crack: for reports we know like ſnowballs gather ſtill the farther they roul: and when I have once handed it to another, how know I how he may improve it? And if he deliver it ſo advanced to a third, he may give his contribution alſo to it, and ſo in a ſucceſſive tranſmitting, it may grow to ſuch a monſtrous bulk, as bears no proportion to its original. He muſt be a great ſtranger to the world, that has not experimentally found the truth of this. How many perſons have lain under great and heavy ſcandals, which have taken their firſt riſe only from ſome inadvertence or indiſcretion? Of ſo quick a growth is Slander, that the leaſt grain, like that of muſtard ſeed, mentioned Mat. 13. 32. immediatly ſhoots up into a tree, and when it is ſo, it can no more be reduced back into its firſt cauſe,

than a tree can ſhrink into that little ſeed from whence it firſt ſprang. No ruins are ſo irreparable as thoſe of reputation: and therefore he that pulls out but one ſtone towards the breach, may do a greater miſchief than perhaps he intends: and a greater injuſtice too: for by how much the more ſtrictly juſtice obliges to reparation in caſe of injuries done, ſo much the more ſeverely do's it prohibit the doing thoſe injuries which are uncapable of being repaired. In the Levitical Law he that knew his ox was apt to gore, and yet kept him not up, ſtood reſponſible for any miſchief he happened to do, Exod. 21. 29. I think there is no conſidering man can be ignorant how apt little trivial accuſations are to tear and mangle ones fame: and yet if the laviſh talker reſtrain them not, he certainly ſtands accountable to God, his neighbour, and his own conſcience, for all the danger they procure.

16. BUT if the report concern ſome higher and enormous crime, 'tis true the delinquent may deſerve the leſs pity, yet perhaps the reporter may not deſerve the leſs blame: for often ſuch a diſ-

diſcovery ſerves, not to reclaime but enrage the offender, and precipitate him into farther degrees of ill. Modeſty and fear of ſhame, is one of thoſe natural reſtraints, which the wiſdom of God has put upon mankind, and he that once ſtumbles, may yet by a check of that bridle recover again: but when by a public detection he is fallen under that infamy he fear'd, he will then be apt to diſcard all caution, and to think he ow's himſelf the utmoſt pleaſures of his vice, as the price of his reputation. Nay perhaps he advances farther, and ſets up for a reverſt ſort of Fame, by being eminently wicked: and he who before was but a clandeſtine diſciple, becomes a doctor of impiety. And ſure it were better let a concealed crime remain in its wiſht obſcurity, than by thus rouzing it from its covert, bring it to ſtand at bay, and ſet it ſelf in this open defiance; eſpecially in this degenerous age, when vice has ſo many well-willers, that, like a hoping party, they eagerly run into any that will head them.

17. AND this brings in a third conſideration relating to the public, to which the divulging of private (eſpecially if they

they be novel unuſual) crimes, do's but an ill piece of ſervice. Vice is contagious, and caſts peſtilential vapors: and as he that ſhould bring out a plague-ſick perſon, to inform the world of his diſeaſe, would be thought not to have much befriended his neighbourhood; ſo he that diſplaies theſe vitious ulcers, whilſt he ſeeks to defame one, may perhaps infect many. We too experimentally find the force of ill examples. Men often take up ſins, to which they have no natural propenſion, meerly by way of conformity and imitation. But if the inſtance happen in a crime, which more ſuits the practice of the hearers, tho it cannot be ſaid to ſeduce, yet it may encourage and confirm them; embolden them not only the more frequently to act, but even to avow thoſe ſins wherein they find they ſtand not ſingle, and by diſcovering a new acceſſory to their party, to invite them the more heartily and openly to eſpouſe it.

18. THESE are ſuch effects as ſurely do not very well correſpond with that juſtice and charity we owe either to particular perſons, or to mankind in general. And indeed no better can be expected from

from a practice which ſo perfectly contradicts the grand rule both of Juſtice and Charity, the doing as we would be done to. That this do's ſo, every man has a ready conviction within him, if he pleaſe but to conſult his own heart. Alas with what ſolicitude do we ſeek to hide our own guilts with falſe dreſſes, what varniſhes have we for them! There are not more arts of diſguiſing our Corporal blemiſhes, than our Moral: and yet whilſt we thus paint and *parget* our own deformities, we cannot allow any the leaſt imperfection of anothers to remain undetected, but tear off the veil from their bluſhing frailties, and not only expoſe but proclaime them. And can there be a groſſer, a more deteſtable partiality than this? God may ſure in this inſtance (as in many others) expoſtulate with us as he did with Iſrael, Ezek. 33. *Are not your ways unequal?* What barbariſm, what inhumanity is it thus to treat thoſe of the ſame common nature with our ſelves, who we cannot but know have the ſame concern to preſerve a Reputation, and the ſame regret to loſe it, which we have? And what ſhame is it, that that Evangelical

precept

precept, of doing as we would be done to, which met with ſo much reverence even from heathens, that *Severus* the Emperor prefer'd it to all the Maxims of Philoſophers; ſhould be thus contemned and violated by Chriſtians, and that too upon ſuch ſlight inconſiderable motives as uſually prevail in this caſe of *Defamation*?

19. BUT we are not to conſider this fault only in its root as it is a defect of Juſtice and Charity, but in its product too, as it is a ſeminary of more injuſtice and uncharitableneſs. Thoſe diſadvantageous reports we make of our neighbors, are almoſt ſeen to come round: for let no man perſwade himſelf, that the hearers will keep his counſel any better than he do's that of the *defamed* perſon. The ſofteſt whiſper of this kind, will find others to echo it, till it reach the ears of the concerned party, and perhaps with ſome enhancing circumſtances too. And when 'tis conſider'd how unwilling men are to hear of their faults, tho even in the mildeſt and moſt charitable way of admonition, 'tis not to be doubted a publick *Defamation*, will ſeem diſobliging enough to provoke a return;

which again begets a rejoinder, and ſo the quarrel is carried on with mutual recriminations; all malicious enquiries are made into each others manners, and thoſe things which perhaps they did in cloſets, come to be proclaimed upon the houſe top: ſo the wild-fire runs round, till ſometimes nothing but blood will quench it; or if it arrive not to that, yet it uſually fixes in irreconcileable feud. To this are often owing thoſe diſtances we ſee among friends and relations; this breeds much ſtrangeneſs, ſuch animoſities amongſt neighbours, that you cannot go to one, but you ſhall be entertain'd with invectives againſt the other; nay perhaps you ſhall loſe both, becauſe you are willing to ſide with neither.

20. THESE are the uſual conſequences of the liberty of the Tongue: and what account can any man give to himſelf, either in chriſtianity or prudence, that has let in ſuch a train of miſchiefs, meerely to gratify an impotent childiſh humor of telling a tale? Peace was the great Legacy Chriſt left to his followers, and ought to be guarded, tho we expoſe for it our greateſt temporal concerns,

but cannot without deſpight to him, as well as our brethren, be thus proſtituted.

21. YET if we conſider it abſtractedly from thoſe more ſolemn miſchiefs which attend it, the mere levity and unworthineſs of it ſets it below an ingenuous perſon. We generally think a tatler and buſie-body a title of no ſmall reproch: yet truly I know not to whom it more juſtly belongs, than to thoſe, who buſy themſelves firſt in learning, and then in publiſhing the faults of others: an employment which the Apoſtle thought a blot, even upon the weaker ſex, and thinks the prevention of ſuch importance, that he preſcribes them to change their whole condition of life; to convert widow-hood (tho a ſtate which in other reſpects he much prefers, 1 Cor. 7. 8.) into marriage, rather than expoſe themſelves to the temtation, 1 Tim. 5. 13, 14. And if their impotence cannot afford excuſe for it, what a debaſement is it of mens nobler faculties to be thus entertained? The Hiſtorian gives it as an ill indication of *Domitian*'s temper, that he employ'd himſelf in catching and tormenting flies: and ſure they

fall

fall not under a much better character, either for wiſdom or good nature, who thus ſnatch up all the little fluttering reports they can meet with to the prejudice of their neighbours.

22. BUT beſides the divulging the faults of others, there is another branch of *Detraction* naturally ſpringing from this root, and this is cenſuring and ſevere judging of them. We think not we have well play'd the Hiſtorians, when we have told the thing, unleſs we add alſo our remarks, and animadverſions on it. And altho 'tis, God knows, bad enough to make a naked relation; and truſt it to the ſeverity of the hearers; yet few can content themſelves with that, but muſt give them a ſample of rigor, and by the bitterneſs of their own cenſure invite them to paſs the like: a proceſs contrary to all rules of law or equity, for the Plaintiff to aſſume the part of a Judge. And we may eaſily divine the fate of that mans fame, that is ſo unduly tried.

23. 'TIS indeed ſad to ſee how many private tribunals are every where ſet up, where we ſcan and judge our neighbours actions, but ſcarce ever acquit any.

We take up with the moſt incompetent witneſſes, nay often ſuborn our own ſurmiſes and jealouſies, that we may be ſure to caſt the unhappy criminal. How nicely and ſcrupulouſly do we examine every circumſtance; (would God we were but half as exact in our own penitential inquiſitions) and torture it to make it confeſs ſomething which appears not in the more general view of the fact, and which perhaps never was in the actors intention? in a word we do like witches with their magical Chymiſtry, extract all the venim, and take none of the allay. By this means we confound the degrees of ſins, and ſentence deliberate and indeliberate, an habit or an act all at one rate, that is commonly, at the utmoſt it can amount to, even in its worſe acception: and ſure this were a moſt culpable corruption in judgment, could we ſhew our commiſſion to judge our brethren.

24. BUT here we may every one of us interrogate our ſelves in our Savior's words, *Who made me a judge?* Luke 12. 14. And if he diſclaim'd it, who in reſpect of his Divinity had the Supreme right, and that too in a caſe wherein one

one (at leaſt) of the Litigants had deſired his interpoſition, what a boldneſs is it in us to aſſume it, where no ſuch appeal is made to us, but on the contrary the party diſowns our Authority? Nay (which is infinitely more) 'tis ſuperſeded by our Law-giver, in that expreſs prohibition, Matth. 7. 1. *Judge not*, and that backt with a ſevere penalty, *that ye be not judged.* As God hath appointed vengeance to himſelf, ſo has he judicature alſo; and 'tis an invaſion of his peculiar, for any (but his Delegates the lawful Magiſtrates) to pretend to either. And indeed in all private judgment, ſo much depends upon the intention of the offender, that unleſs we could poſſeſs our ſelves of Gods omniſcience, 'twill be as irrational as impious to aſſume his authority. Until we know mens hearts, we are at the beſt but imperfect judges of their actions. At our rate of judging *St. Paul* had ſurely paſs'd for a moſt malicious perſecutor, whereas God ſaw he *did it ignorantly in unbelief*, and upon that intuition had *mercy on him*, 1 Tim. 1. 13. 'Tis therefore good counſel which the Apoſtle gives, 1 Cor. 4. 5. *Judge nothing before*

before the time until the Lord come. For tho 'tis ſaid, *the ſaints ſhall judge the world*, 1 Cor. 6. 2. yet it muſt be at the great aſſize, and he that will needs intrude himſelf into the office before the time, will be in danger to be rather paſſive than active in the judicatory. I do not here adviſe to ſuch a ſtupid charity as ſhall make no diſtinction of actions. I know there is a wo pronounced as well to thoſe who *call evil good*, *as good evil.* Surely when we ſee an open notorious ſin committed, we may expreſs a deteſtation of the crime, tho not of the actor; nay it may ſometimes be a neceſſary Charity, both to the offender, and to the innocent ſpectators, as an Amulet to keep them from the contagion of the example. But ſtill even in theſe caſes, our ſentence muſt not exceed the evidence, we muſt judge only according to the viſible undoubted circumſtances, and not aggravate the crime upon preſumtions and conjectures; if we do, how right ſoever our gueſſes may be, our judgment is not, but we are as St. James ſpeaks, *Judges of evil thoughts*, Chap. 2. 4.

25. INDEED this raſh judging is not only

only very unjuſt both to God and man, but it is an act of the greateſt pride. When we ſet our ſelves in the tribunal, we alwaies look down with contemt on thoſe at the bar. And certainly there is nothing do's ſo gratify, ſo *regale* an haughty humor, as this piece of uſurpt ſoverainty over our brethren: but the more it do's ſo, the greater neceſſity there is to abſtain from it. Pride is an hardy kind of vice, that will live upon the bareſt paſture: you cannot ſtarve it with the moſt induſtrious mortifications: how little need is there then of pampering and heightning it, which we cannot more effectually do, than by this cenſorious humor? for by that we are ſo perpetually emploi'd abroad, that we have no leiſure to look home-ward, and ſee our own defects. We are like the inhabitants of *Ai*, Joſ. 8. ſo eager upon the purſuit of others, that we leave our ſelves expos'd to the ambuſhes of Satan, who will be ſure ſtill to encourage us in our chaſe, draw us ſtill farther and farther from our ſelves, and cares not how zealous we are in fighting againſt the crimes of others, ſo he can but keep that zeal from recoiling upon our own.

26. LASTLY

26. LASTLY this judging others is one of the higheſt violations of Charity. The Apoſtle gives it as one of the properties of that grace, that *it thinks no evil* (*i. e.*) is not apt to make ſevere conſtructions, but ſets every thing in the faireſt light, puts the moſt candid interpretations that the matter will bear. And truly this is of great importance to the reputation of our neighbours. The world we know is in many inſtances extremely governed by opinion, but in this it is all in all; it has not only an influence upon it, but is that very thing: reputation being nothing but a fair opinion and eſtimation among others. Now this opinion is not alwaies ſwayed by due motives: ſometimes little accidents, and often fancy, and ofteſt prepoſſeſſion governs in it. So that many times he that puts the firſt ill Character, fixes the ſtamp which afterwards goes current in the world. The generality of people take up prejudices (as they do religions) upon truſt: and of thoſe that are more curious of inquiring into the grounds, there are not many who vary on the more charitable hand, or bring the common ſentence to review, with intent to

moderate but enhance it. Men are apt to think it ſome diſparagement to their acuteneſs and invention, if they cannot ſay ſomething as ſharp upon the ſubject, as has bin ſaid before; and ſo 'tis the buſineſs of many to lay on more load, but of few to take off: and therefore he that paſſes the firſt condemnatory ſentence, is like the incendiary in a popular tumult, who is chargeable with all thoſe diſorders to which he gave the firſt riſe, tho that free not his abettors from their ſhare of the guilt.

27. AND as this is very uncharitable in reſpect of the injury offer'd, ſo alſo is it in reflection on the grand rule of Charity. Can we pretend to love our neighbours as our ſelves, and yet ſhall our love to him have the quite contrary effects to that we bear our ſelves? Can ſelf-love leſſen our beam into a mote, and yet can our love to him magnify his mote into a beam? No certainly, true Charity is more ſincere, do's not turn to us the reverſe-end of the perſpective, to repreſent our own faults at a diſtance, and in the moſt diminutive ſize, and yet ſhuffle the other to us when we are to view his. No, theſe are tricks of

Legerdemain we read in another ſchool, even in his whoſe ſtile is *the accuſer of the brethren.* We know how frequently God proteſts againſt falſe weights and falſe meaſures. And ſurely 'tis not only in the ſhop or market that he abhors them, they are no leſs abominable in converſation than in traffic. To buy by one meaſure and ſell by another, is not more unequal, than it is to have theſe differing ſtandards for our own and our neighbours faults, that our own ſhall weigh, in the prophet Jeremie's phraſe, *lighter then vanity*, *yea nothing*, and yet his (tho really the lighter) ſhall prove Zacharie's *talent of lead.* This is ſuch a partiality, as conſiſts not with common honeſty, and can therefore never be reconciled with Chriſtian Charity: and how demurely ſoever ſuch men may pretend to ſanctity, that interrogation of God preſſes hard upon them, *ſhall I count them pure with the wicked ballances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?* Micah 6. 11. Such bitter invectives againſt other mens faults, and indulgence or palliation of their own, ſhews their zeal lies in their ſpleen, and that they conſider not ſo much what is done, as who do's

do's it: and to ſuch the ſentence of the Apoſtle is very applicable, Rom. 2. 1. *Therefore thou art inexcuſable, O man, whoſoever thou art that judgeſt, for wherein thou judgeſt another thou condemneſt thy ſelf, for thou that judgeſt doeſt the ſame thing.* But admit a man have not the very ſame guilts he cenſures in another, yet 'tis ſure every man has ſome; and of what ſort ſoever they be, he deſires not they ſhould be rigorouſly ſcan'd, and therefore by the rule of Charity, yea and Juſtice too, ought not to do that which he would not ſuffer. If he can find extenuations for his own crimes, he is in all reaſon to preſume others may have ſo for theirs: the common frailty of our nature, as it is apt alike to betray us to faults, ſo it gives as equal a ſhare in the excuſe; and therefore what I would have paſs for the effect of impotency or inadvertence in my ſelf, I can with no tolerable ingenuity give a worſe name to in him.

28. WE have now viewed both theſe branches of *detraction*, ſeen both the ſin and miſchiefs of them; we may now join them together in a concluding obſervation, which is, that they are as im-

prudent as they are unchriſtian. It has bin received among the maxims of civil life, not unneceſſarily to exaſperate any body; to which agrees the advice of an ancient Philoſopher, *Speak not evil of thy neighbour, if thou doſt thou ſhalt hear that which will not fail to trouble thee.* There is no perſon ſo inconſiderable, but may at ſome time or other do a diſpleaſure: but in this of *defaming* men need no harneſſing, no preparation: every man has his weapons ready for a return: ſo that none can ſhoot theſe arrows, but they muſt expect they will revert with a rebounded force; not only to the violation of Chriſtian Unity (as I have before obſerv'd) but to the aggreſſors great ſecular detriment, both in fame, and oftentimes intereſt alſo. Revenge is ſharp-ſighted, and overlooks no opportunity of a retaliation; and that commonly not bounded as the Levitical ones were, *An eie for an eie, a tooth for a tooth*, Exod. 21. 24. no nor by the larger proportions of their reſtitutions *four-fold*, Exod. 22. 1. but extended to the utmoſt power of the inflicter. The examples are innumerable of men who have thus laid themſelves open in their greateſt

greateſt concerns, and have let looſe the hands as well Tongues of others againſt them, merely becauſe they would put no reſtraint upon their own: which is ſo great indiſcretion, that to them we may well apply that of Solomon, *A fools mouth is his deſtruction, and his lips are the ſnare of his ſoul.* Prov. 18. 7.

29. AND now who can ſufficiently wonder, that a practice that ſo thwarts our intereſt of both worlds, ſhould come univerſally to prevail among us? Yet that it do's ſo, I may appeal to the conſciences of moſt, and to the obſervation of all. What ſo common topic of diſcourſe is there, as this of back-biting our neighbours? Come into company of all ages, all ranks, all profeſſions, this is the conſtant entertainment: and I doubt he that at night ſhall duly recollect the occurrences of the day, ſhall very rarely be able to ſay, he has ſpent it without hearing or ſpeaking (perhaps both) ſomewhat of this kind. Nay even thoſe who reſtrain themſelves other liberties, are often apt to indulge to this: many who are ſo juſt to their neighbours property, that as Abraham once ſaid, Gen. 14. 23. *they would not take*

take from him, even from a thred to a ſhoe latchet, are yet ſo inconſiderate of his Fame, as to find themſelves diſcourſe at the expence of that, tho infinitly a greater injury than the robbing of his coffer: which ſhew's what falſe meaſures we are apt to take of things, and evinces that many of thoſe, who have not only in general abjur'd the world in their baptiſm, but do in many inſtances ſeem to themſelves (as well as others) to have gain'd a ſuperiority over it, do yet in this undiſcernably yield it the greateſt enſign of ſoverainty, by permitting it to ſet the ſtandards and eſtimates of things, and taking its cuſtomary preſcriptions for laws. For what beſides this unhappy ſervility to cuſtom, can poſſibly reconcile men that own Chriſtianity, to a practice ſo widely diſtant from it? 'Tis true thoſe that profeſs themſelves men of this world, who deſign only their portion in this life, may take it up as ſometimes conducing (at leaſt ſeemingly) to their end: but for thoſe who propoſe higher hopes to themſelves, and know that Charity is one of the main props to thoſe hopes, how fooliſhly do they undermine themſelves, when they thus act

act againſt their principles, and that upon no other authority, but that of popular uſage? I know men are apt to excuſe themſelves upon their indignation againſt vice, and think that their zeal muſt as well acquit them for this violation of the ſecond Table, as it once did Moſes for the breaking both, Exod. 32. 19. But to ſuch I may anſwer in Chriſts words, Luke 9. 55. *Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of.* Meekneſs and Charity are the evangelical graces, which will moſt recommend and aſſimilate us to him, who was meek and lowly in heart. But after all this pretext of zeal, I fear it is but a cheat we put on our ſelves, the Elder brothers raiment only to diſguiſe the Supplanter, Gen. 27. Let men truly ranſack their own breaſts, and I doubt the beſt will find there is ſomething of vanity which lies at the bottom, if it be not the poſitive ſort mention'd before, of deſigning to illuſtrate my ſelf by others blemiſhes, yet at leaſt the negative, that I am unwilling to incur the contemt incident to thoſe, who ſcruple at ſmall ſins. Beſides I obſerve perhaps, that 'tis the common entertainment of the world, to defame their

their neighbours, and if I ſtrike not in upon the Theme, I ſhall have nothing to render me acceptable company; perhaps I ſhall be reproched as moroſe or dull, and my ſilence ſhall be conſtrued to proceed not from the abundance of my Charity, but the defect of my Wit.

20. BUT ſure they that can thus argue, do hereby give a more demonſtrative proof of that defect. He whoſe wit is ſo precarious, that it muſt depend only upon the folly or vice of another, had beſt give over all pretence to it. He that has nothing of his own growth to ſet before his gueſts, had better make no invitations, than break down his neighbours incloſure, and feaſt them upon his plunder. Beſides how pitiful an atteſtation of wit is it, to be able to make a diſgraceful relation of another? No ſcolding woman but may ſet up ſuch Trophies: and they that can value a man upon ſuch an account, may prefer the *Scarabes*, who feed upon dung, and are remark'd by no other property, before the Bee that ſucks flowers and returns hony.

31. BUT in the next place admit this reſtraint ſhould certainly expoſe one to

that reproach; methinks this ſhould be no news to thoſe who know the condition of Chriſtianity is to take up the Croſs: and ſure it cannot weigh lighter than in this inſtance. What am I the worſe if a vain talkative perſon think me too reſerv'd? Or if he, whoſe frolic levity is his diſeaſe, call me dull, becauſe I vapor not out all my ſpirits into froth? *Socrates* when inform'd of ſome derogating ſpeeches one had uſed of him behind his back, made only this facetious reply, Let him beat me too when I am abſent. And he that gets not ſuch an indifference to all the idle cenſures of men, will be diſturb'd in all his civil tranſactions, as well as his chriſtian: it being ſcarce poſſible to do any thing, but there will be deſcants made on it. And if a man will regard thoſe winds, he muſt, as *Solomon* ſaies, *never ſow*, Eccl. 11. 4. He muſt ſuſpend even the neceſſary actions of common life, if he will not venture them to the being misjudged by others.

32. BUT there is yet a farther conſideration in this matter: for he that upon ſuch a deſpicable motive will violate his duty in one particular, lets Sa-

tan get a main point of him, and can with no good Logic deny to do it in others. Detraction is not the only ſin in faſhion: Profaneneſs, and Obſcenity, and all ſorts of luxury are ſo too, and threaten no leſs reproach to thoſe who ſcruple at them. Upon the ſame grounds therefore that he diſcards his Charity to his neighbour, he may alſo his Piety, his Modeſty, his Temperance, and almoſt all other virtues. And to ſpeak the truth, there is not a more fertile womb of ſin, than this dread of ill mens reproach. Other corruptions muſt be gratifi'd with coſt and induſtry, but in this the devil hath no farther trouble than to laugh men out of their ſouls. So prolific a vice therefore had need be weeded out of mens hearts: for if it be allowed the leaſt corner, if it be indulged to in this one inſtance, 'twill quickly ſpread it ſelf farther.

33. YET after all, this fear of reproach is a mere fallacy, ſtarted to diſguiſe a more real cauſe of fear: for the greater danger of reproach do's indeed lie on that other ſide. Common eſtimation puts an ill character upon pragmatic medling people. For tho the inquiſi-

quiſitiveneſs and curioſity of the hearer may ſometimes render ſuch diſcourſes grateful enough to him, yet it leaves in him no good impreſſions of the ſpeaker. This is well obſerv'd by the ſon of Sirach, Eccluſ. 19. 8, 9. *Whether it be to friend or foe, talk not of other mens lives, and if thou canſt without offence, reveal them not, for he heard and obſerv'd thee, and when time cometh he will hate thee.* In a word all conſidering perſons will be ever upon their guard in ſuch company, as foreſeeing that they will talk no leſs freely of them, than they do of others before them. Nor can the commonneſs of the guilt obviate the cenſure, there being nothing more frequent than for men to accuſe their own faults in other perſons, Vice is like a dark lantern, which turns its bright ſide only to him that bears it, but looks black and diſmal in anothers hand: and in this particular none has ſo much reaſon to fear a *defamer*, as thoſe who are themſelves ſuch: for (beſides the common prudential motive) their own conſciouſneſs gives them an inward alarm, and makes them look for a retribution in the ſame kind. Thus upon the whole matter we

ſee, there is no real temtation, even to our vanity, to comply with this uncharitable cuſtom, we being ſure to loſe more repute by it than we can propoſe to our ſelves to gain. The being eſteem'd an ill man will not be ballanced by being thought pleaſant ingenious company, were one ſure to be ſo. But 'tis odds that will not be acquired by it neither, for the moſt aſſiduous tale-bearers and bittereſt revilers are often half-witted people: there being nothing more frequently obſerved, than ſuch mens aptneſs to ſpeak evil of things they underſtand not, Jude 10.

34. O let not then thoſe that have repudiated the more inviting ſins, ſhew themſelves philtred and bewitch'd by this, but inſtead of ſubmitting to the ill example of others, ſet a good one to them, and endeavor to bring this unchriſtian cuſtom out of faſhion, I am ſure if they do not, they will be more deeply chargeable than others: for the more command they have over their other corruptions, the more do they witneſs againſt themſelves. Their remiſsneſs and willing ſubjection to this, beſides their example when ill, is more enſnaring than other mens, and is apt to

to inſinuate eaſy thoughts of the ſin. Men are apt to think themſelves ſafe while they follow one of noted piety, and the authority of his perſon often leads them blindfold into his failings. Thus when *Peter* diſſembled, St. *Paul* tells us, that the other *Jews and even Barnabas alſo was carried away with his diſſimulation*, Galat. 2. 13. And I doubt not in this particular many are encouraged by the liberty they ſee even good men take. So that ſuch have a more accumulative guilt, for they do not only commit, but patronize the fault: the conſideration whereof has kept me, I confeſs, longer upon this head than is proportionable to the brevity of the reſt; but I think not longer than agrees to the importance of the ſubject.

35. AND now ſince we have conſider'd the malignity of this ſin of *Detraction*, and yet withal find that 'tis a ſin, which as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *doth ſo eaſily beſet us*, 'tis but a natural Corollary that we enforce our vigilance againſt it. And where the importance and difficulty are both ſo great, 'twill be a little neceſſary to conſider what are the likeliеſt means, the moſt appropriate antidote againſt

againſt this ſo dangerous, and yet ſo epidemic a diſeaſe.

36. And here the common rule of Phyſic is to be adverted to, viz. to examine the cauſes, that the remedies may be adapted to them. I ſhall therefore in the firſt place deſire every man ſeriouſly to ſtudy his own conſtitution of mind, and obſerve what are his particular temtations to this ſin of *detraction*, whether any of thoſe I have before menti-on'd, as Pride, Envy, Levity, &c. or any other which lies deeper, and is only diſcernible to his own inſpection. Let him, I ſay, make the ſcrutiny, and then accordingly apply himſelf to correct the ſin in its firſt principle. For as when there is an eruption of humors in any part 'tis not cured meerely by outward applications, but by ſuch alterative medicines as purify the blood; ſo this Leproſy of the Tongue will ſtill ſpread farther, if it be not check'd in its ſpring and ſource, by the mortifying of thoſe corrupt inclinations, which feed and heighten it.

37. This is an inquiſition I muſt leave to every mans own Conſcience, which alone can teſtify by what impulſes

pulſes he acts. Yet as the Rabbins were wont to ſay, that in every ſignal judgment which befell the Jews, there was ſome grain of the Golden-calf; ſo I think I may venture to ſay, that in all *detraction*, there is ſome mixture of pride: and therefore I ſuppoſe, a Caution againſt that, will be ſo generally ſeaſonable, that it may well lead the Van of all other advices in this matter. And here 'tis very obſervable, that God who has *made of one blood all nations of the earth*, Acts 17. has ſo equally diſtributed all the moſt valuable privileges of humane nature, as if he deſign'd to preclude all inſulting of one man over another. Neither has he only thus inſinuated it by his Providence, but has enforc'd it by his commands. In the Levitical Law we find what a particular care he takes to moderate the rigor of Judicial correction, upon this very account, leſt *thy brother be deſpiſed in thine eies*, Deuter. 25. 3. So unreaſonable did he think it, that the crime or miſery of one, ſhould be the exultation of another. And St. *Paul* brands it as a great guilt of the *Corinthians*, that they upon the occaſion of the inceſtuous perſon

ſon *were puffed up*, *when they ſhould have mourned*, 1 Cor. 5. 2. When we ſee a dead corps, we are not apt to inſult over it, or brag of our own health and vigor; but it rather damps us, and makes us reflect, that it may (we know not how ſoon) be our own condition. And certainly the ſpectacles of ſpiritual mortality ſhould have the ſame operation. We have the ſame principles of corruption with our lapſed brethren, and have nothing but Gods grace, to ſecure us from the ſame effect, and by theſe inſulting reflections forfeit that too; for *he gives grace only to the humble*, Jam. 4. 6. St. Paul's advice therefore is very appoſite to this caſe, Gal. 6. 1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, reſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit of meekneſs, conſidering thy ſelf leſt thou alſo be tempted.* In a word the faults of others ought to excite our pity towards them, our caution as to our ſelves, and our thankfulneſs to God, if he hath hitherto preſerv'd us from the like, *For who made thee to differ from another?* 1 Cor. 4. 7. But if we ſpread our ſails and triumph over theſe wrecks, we expoſe our ſelves to worſe. Other ſins like rocks may ſplit us,

yet the lading may be preſerv'd: but Pride like a gulph ſwallows us up; our very virtues when ſo leavened, becoming weights and plummets to ſink us to the deeper ruine. The counſel therefore of the Apoſtle, is very pertinent to this matter, Rom. 11. 20. *Be not high minded, but fear.*

38. BUT God knows we can inſult over others when we are not only under a poſſibility, but are actually involv'd in the ſame guilt: and then what are all our accuſations and bitter cenſures of others, but indictments and condemnatory ſentences againſt our ſelves? And we may juſtly expect God ſhould take us at our word, and reply upon us as the Prophet did upon *David*, *Thou art the man*, 2 Sam. 12. 7. For tho our officious vehemence againſt anothers crime, may blind the eies of men, yet God is not ſo mocked. As therefore when a thief or murderer is detected, it gives an alarm to the whole confederacy; ſo when we find our own guilts purſued in other mens perſons, 'tis not a time for us to join in the proſecution, but rather by humble and penitent reflections on our ſelves to provide for our own ſafety.

When therefore we find our ſelves (upon any miſdemeanour of our brother) ready to mount the tribunal, and pronounce our ſentence, let us firſt conſider how competent we are for the office, calling to mind the deciſion of Chriſt once made in the like caſe, *He that is without ſin let him firſt caſt a ſtone*, Joh. 8. 7. And if we did this, many perhaps of our fierceſt impeachers, would think fit to retire and leave the delinquent (as they themſelves finally deſire to be) to to the merciful indulgence of a Saviour. In ſhort, would we but look into our own hearts, we ſhould find ſo much work for our inquiſitions and cenſure, that we ſhould not be at leiſure to ramble abroad for it. And therefore as *Lycurgus* once ſaid to one, who importun'd him to eſtabliſh a popular parity in the ſtate, do thou, ſaies he, begin it firſt in thine own family: ſo ſhall I adviſe thoſe that will be judging, to practiſe firſt at home. And if they will confine themſelves to that, till there be nothing left to correct, I doubt not their neighbour will be well enough ſecur'd againſt their *detractions*.

39. ANOTHER preſervation againſt that

that ſin is the frequent contemplation of the laſt and great judgment. This is indeed a Catholicon againſt all: but we find it particularly apply'd by St. *Paul* to this of judging and deſpiſing our brethren. *Why doſt thou judge thy brother? or why doſt thou ſet at nought thy brother? We ſhall all ſtand before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt.* Rom. 14. 10. That is the great day of revelation and retribution, and we are not to anticipate it by our private inqueſts or ſentences: we have buſineſs enough to provide our own accounts againſt that day. And as it were a ſpightfull folly for malefactors that were going together to the bar, to ſpend their time in exaggerating each others crimes: ſo ſurely is it for us, who are all going toward the dreadful tribunal, to be drawing up Charges againſt one another. And who knows but we may then meet with the fate of *Daniels* accuſers, ſee him we cenſur'd acquitted, and our ſelves doomed. The penitence of the criminal may have numbred him among the ſaints, when our unretracted uncharitableneſs may ſend us to unquenchable flames. I conclude this conſideration with the words of St. *James*, *There is one*

lawgiver who is able to ſave and to deſtroy, who art thou that judgeſt another? Jam. 4. 12.

40. A third expedient may be, to try to make a revulſion to the humor, to draw it into another chanel. If we muſt needs be talking of other peoples faults, let it not be to *defame*, but to amend them, by converting our *detraction* and backbiting into admonition and fraternal correption. This is a way to extract medicine out of the viper, to conſecrate even this ſo unhallow'd a part of our temper, and to turn the ungrateful medling of a buſie-body, into the moſt obliging office of a friend. And indeed had we that zeal for virtue, which we pretend when we inveigh againſt vice, we ſhould ſurely lay it out this way, for this only gives a poſſibility of reforming the offender. But alas! we order the matter ſo, as if we fear'd to loſe the occaſion of clamor, and will tell all the world but him that it moſt concerns. Indeed 'tis a deplorable thing to ſee how univerſally this neceſſary Chriſtian duty is neglected; and to that neglect we may in a great degree impute that ſtrange overflowing of *detraction* among

among us. We know the receiving any thing into our charge, inſenſibly begets a love and tenderneſs to it (a nurſe upon this account comes often to vie kindneſs with the mother:) and would we but take one another thus into our care, and by friendly vigilance thus watch over each others ſouls, 'tis ſcarce imaginable what an endearment it would create: ſuch certainly as would infallibly ſupplant all our unkind reportings, and ſevere deſcants upon our brethren; ſince thoſe can never take place, but when there is at leaſt an indifference, if not an enmity.

41. THE next cure I ſhall propoſe for *detraction*, is to ſubſtract its nuriſhment, by ſuppreſſing all curioſity and inquiſitiveneſs concerning others. Were all ſupplies thus cut off, it would at laſt be ſubdued. The king of *Ethiopia* in a vie of wit with the king of *Egypt*, propos'd it as a Problem to him, to drink up the Sea, to which he repli'd, by requiring him firſt to ſtop the acceſs of Rivers to it: and he that would drain this other Ocean, muſt take the ſame courſe, dam up the avenues of thoſe Springs which feed it. He that

that is alwaies upon the ſcent, hunting out ſome diſcovery of others, will be very apt to invite his neighbours to the quarry; and therefore 'twill be neceſſary for him, to reſtrain himſelf from that range: not like jealous States, to keep ſpies and penſioners abroad to bring him intelligence, but rather diſcourage all ſuch officious pick-thanks: for the fuller he is of ſuch informations, the more is his pain if he keep them in, and his guilt if he publiſh them. Could men be perſwaded to affect a wholeſome ignorance in theſe matters, it would conduce both to their eaſe and innocence: for 'tis this itch of the ear which breaks out at the tongue: and were not curioſity the purveior, *detraction* would ſoon be ſtarved into a tameneſs.

42. BUT the moſt infallible receit of all, is the frequent recollecting, and ſerious applying of the grand rule, of doing as we would be done to: for as *detraction* is the violation of that, ſo the obſervation of that muſt certainly ſupplant *detraction*. Let us therefore when we find the humor fermenting within us, and ready to break out in declamations againſt our brethren, let us, I ſay, check it

it with this ſhort queſtion, Would I my ſelf be thus us'd? This voice from within, will be like that from heaven to St. *Paul*, which ſtopt him in the height of his carier, Act. 9. 4. And this voice every man may hear that will not ſtop his ears, nor gag his conſcience, it being but the echo of that native juſtice and equity which is planted in our hearts: and when we have our remedy ſo near us, and will not uſe it, God may well expoſtulate with us, as he did with the Jews, *Why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael?* Ezek. 33. 11.

43. THESE are ſome of thoſe many receits which may be preſcrib'd againſt this ſpreading diſeaſe. But indeed there is not ſo much need to multiply remedies, as to perſwade men to apply them. We are in love with our malady, and as loth to be cured of the luxury of the tongue, as St. *Auguſtine* was of his other ſenſuality, againſt which he prayed with a *caveat*, that he might not be too ſoon heard. But 'tis ill dallying, where our ſouls are concern'd: for alas! 'tis they that are wounded by thoſe darts, which we throw at others. We take our aim perhaps at our neighbours, but indeed hit our

our ſelves: herein verifying in the high-eſt ſenſe that axiom of the Wiſe-man, *He that diggeth a pit, ſhall fall into it, and he that rolleth a ſtone, it ſhall return upon him.* Prov. 26. 27. If therefore we have no tenderneſs, no relenting to our brethren, yet let us have ſome to our ſelves; ſo much compaſſion, nay ſo much reſpect to our precious immortal ſouls, as not to ſet them at ſo deſpicable a price, to put them in ballance with the ſatisfying of a petulant peeviſh vanity. Surely the ſhewing our ſelves ill-natur'd (which is all the gain *detraction* amounts to) is not ſo enamouring a deſign, that we ſhould ſacrifice to it our higheſt intereſt. 'Tis too much to ſpend our breath in ſuch a purſuit: O let not our ſouls alſo exhale in the vapor; but let us rather pour them out in praiers for our brethren, than in accuſations of them: for tho both the one and the other will return into our own boſoms, yet God knows to far differing purpoſes, even as differing as thoſe wherewith we utter them. The charity of the one like kindly exhalations will deſcend in ſhowers of bleſſings, but the rigor and aſperity of the other, in a ſevere doom upon our ſelves: for the A-

poſtle

Apoſtle will tell us, *He ſhall have judgment without mercy, that hath ſhewed no mercy*, James 2. 13.

SECT. VII.

Of Scoffing and Deriſion.

THERE is alſo another fault of the Tongue injurious to our neighbour, and that is *Deriſion* and Mockery; and ſtriving to render others as ridiculous and contemtible as we can. This in reſpect of the ſubject matter differs from the other of Detraction, as much as folly or deformity do's from vice: yet ſince injuries as well as benefits, are to be meaſured by common eſtimation, this may come in balance with the other. There is ſuch a general averſation in humane nature to contemt, that there is ſcarce any thing more exaſperating. I will not deny but the exceſs of that averſation may be level'd againſt pride: yet ſure ſcorn and diſdain never ſprung from humility, and therefore are very

incompetent correctors of the other; ſo that it may be ſaid of that, as once it was of *Diogenes*, that he trampled on *Plato*'s pride, with greater of his own.

2. NOR is this injury enhanced only by the reſentment of the ſufferer, but alſo by the way of inflicting it. We generally think thoſe are the ſevereſt marks of infamy which are the moſt indelible. To be burnt in the hand or pilloried, is a more laſting reproach than to be ſcourged or confined; and it is the ſame in this caſe, for here commonly Wit is the Lictor, which is arm'd with an edg'd tool, and leaves ſcars behind it. The reproach of rage and fury ſeems to be writ in chalk or lead, which a diſ-paſſionate hearer eaſily wipes out, but thoſe of wit are like the gravers burine upon copper, or the corrodings of *Aqua-fortis*, engrave and indent the characters that they can never be defaced. The truth of this daily experience atteſts. A dull contumely quickly vaniſhes, no body thinking it worth remembring, but when 'tis ſteel'd with Wit, it pierces deep, leaves ſuch impreſſions in the fancy of the hearers, that thereby it gets rooting in the memory, and will ſcarce-

ſcarcely be eradicated; nay ſometimes it happens to ſurvive both ſpeaker and hearer, and conveys it ſelf to poſterity; it being not unuſual for the ſarcaſms of Wit to be tranſmitted in ſtory. And as it thus gives an edge, ſo alſo do's it add wings to a report, makes it fly abroad in an inſtant. Many a poor mans infirmities had been confined to the notice of a few relations or neighbours, had not ſome remarkable ſtrein of drollery ſcatter'd and diſperſed them. The jeſt recommends the Defamation, and is commonly ſo incorporate with it, that they cannot be related apart. And even thoſe who like it not in one reſpect, yet are many times ſo tranſported with it in the other, that they chuſe rather to propagate the contumely, than ſtifle the conceit. Indeed Wit is ſo much the *Diana* of this age, that he that goes about to ſet any bounds to it, muſt expect an *uproar*, Acts 19. 28. &c. or at leaſt to be judged to have impoſed an envious inhibition on it, becauſe himſelf has not ſtock enough to maintain the trade. But how ever ſharp or unexpected the cenſure may ſeem to be, yet 'tis neceſſary that plain downright truth ſhould ſometimes

be ſpoken, and I think that will bear me out, if I ſay 'tis poſſible men may be as oppreſſive by their parts, as their power; and that God did no more deſign the meaner intellectuals of ſome for triumphs to the pride and vanity of the more acute, than he did the poſſeſſions of the leſs powerful, as a prey to the rapine and avarice of the mighty.

3. And this ſuggeſts a yet farther aggravation of this ſin, as it is a perverting of Gods deſign, and abuſe of the talent he has committed to men in truſt. Ingenuity and quickneſs of parts, is ſure to be reckoned in the higheſt rank of bleſſings, and an inſtrument proper for the moſt excellent purpoſes: and therefore we cannot ſuppoſe the Divine wiſdom ſo much ſhort of humane, as not in his intention to aſſign it to uſes worthy of it. Thoſe muſt relate either to God, our ſelves, or our neighbours. In reſpect of God, it renders us more capable of contemplating his perfections, diſcerning the equity and excellence of his laws, and our obligations to obedience. In regard of our ſelves it makes us apprehend our own intereſt in that obedience; makes us tractable and perſwaſible,

ſwaſible, contrary to that brutiſh ſtubborneſs of the Horſe and Mule, which the Pſalmiſt reproaches, Pſal. 32. 9. Beſides it accommodates us in all the concerns of humane life, forms it ſelf into all thoſe uſeful contrivances, which may make our being here more comfortable: eſpecially it renders a man company to himſelf, and in the greateſt dearth of ſociety, entertains him with his own thoughts. Laſtly, as to our neighbours, it renders us uſeful and aſſiſtant. All thoſe diſcoveries and experiments, thoſe Arts and Sciences, which are now the common treaſure of the world, took their firſt riſe from the ingenuity of particular perſons: and in all perſonal exigencies wherein any of us are at any time involved, we need not be told the uſefulneſs of a wiſe adviſer. Now all theſe are emploiments commenſurable to the faculty from whence they flow, and that anſwer its excellence and value; and he that ſo beſtows his talent, gives a good account of his truſt. But I would fain know under which of theſe heads *deriſion* of our neighbour comes in; certainly not under that of being aſſiſtant to him. It would be a ſorry relief to a poor

poor indigent wretch, to laviſh out wit upon him, in upbraiding of his miſery. And is not this a parallel caſe? Is it not the ſame barbariſm, to mock and reproach a man that wants the gifts of Nature, as him that wants thoſe of Fortune? Nay perhaps it may be more, for a beggar may have impoveriſht himſelf by his own fault, but in Natural defects there is nothing to be charged, unleſs we will fly higher, and arraign that Providence that hath ſo diſpenſed. In a word as the ſuperfluities of the rich are by God aſſign'd as the ſtore-houſe of the poor; ſo the abilities of the wiſe are of the ignorant: for 'tis a great miſtake, to think our ſelves ſtewards in ſome of Gods gifts, and proprietaries in others. They are equally to be employed, according to the deſignation of the donor, and there is nothing more univerſally deſign'd by him, than that mankind ſhould be equally helpful to one another. Thoſe therefore whom God hath bleſt with higher degrees of ſagacity and quickneſs, ought not to look down on others as the objects of their contemt or ſcorn, but rather of their care and pity, endeavouring to reſcue them

them from thoſe miſchiefs, to which their weakneſs may expoſe them, remembring ſtill, that God might have changed the ſcene, and made themſelves what they ſee others. It is part of *Jobs* juſtification of his integrity, that *he was eies to the blind, and feet to the lame*, Job 29. 15. (*i. e.*) he accommodated his aſſiſtances to all the wants and exigencies of others: and ſure 'tis no leſs the part of a good man to do it in the mental than in the corporeal defects.

4. BUT alas! many of us would rather put a ſtumbling block in the way of the blind, pull away the crutch from the lame, that we may ſport our ſelves to ſee them tumble: ſuch a ſenſuality we have in obſerving and improving the imperfections of others, that it is become the grand excellence of the age to be dextruous at it, and Wit ſerves ſome men for little elſe. We are got indeed into a merry world, laughing is our main buſineſs; as if becauſe it has bin made part of the definition of man, that he is Riſible, his man-hood conſiſted in nothing elſe. But alas! if that be all the uſe men have of their underſtandings, they were given them to little purpoſe

poſe, ſince mere idiots can laugh with as much pleaſure and more innocence than they; and it is a great inſtance how extremes may be brought to meet, that the exceſs of Wit in the one, and of Folly in the other, ſerve to produce the ſame effect.

5. YET ſo voracious is this humor now grown, that it draws in every thing to feed it. There is not game enough from the real folly of the world, and therefore that which is the moſt diſtant from it muſt be ſtampt with its mark. 'Tis a known ſtory of the Frier who on a faſting day bid his Capon be Carp, and then very canonically ate it; and by ſuch a tranſubſtantiating power our Wits bid all ſerioufneſs and conſideration be formality and foppery, and then under that name endeavour to hunt it out of the world. I fear moral honeſty fares not better with ſome of them than moral prudence. The old philoſophical virtues of Juſtice, Temperance, and Chaſtity are now hiſt off the ſtage, as fit only for the antiquated ſet of Actors, and he that appears in that equipage, is by many thought more ridiculous, than he that walks the ſtreet in

his Anceſtors trunk-hoſe. Nay indeed vice it ſelf is ſcarce ſecure if it have not the grand accompliſhment of impudence: a puny bluſhing ſinner is to be laught out of his modeſty, tho not out of his ſin; and to be proof againſt their ſcorns he muſt firſt be ſo againſt all the regrets of his own mind.

6. AND if mere Ethnic virtue, or ſhame-faced vice have this treatment, Chriſtian piety muſt expect worſe: and ſo indeed it finds, its profeſſors being beyond all others expoſed to their ſcorn and contemts. Nor is it ſtrange it ſhould be ſo, ſome men being *made*, as it is Wiſd. 2. 14. *to reprove their waies*, they think in their own defence they are to deride theirs. This is it indeed which gives a ſecret ſting and venim to their reproaches: other men they abuſe as an exerciſe of their Wit, but theſe in defence of the party. So *Julian* after his Apoſtacy, thought it a more effectual way to perſecute the Chriſtians by taunts and ironies, than by racks and tortures, as thinking it more poſſible to ſhame, than fright them out of their religion. And the ſtratagem ſeems to have bin reaſſumed by many in this age, and I

fear with too great ſucceſs: for I doubt not there are divers who have herded themſelves among theſe profane ſcoffers, not that they are convinced by their reaſons, but terrified by their contumelies; and as ſome Indians are ſaid to worſhip the Devil, that he may not hurt them; ſo theſe chuſe to be active, that they may not be paſſive in the contemts flung upon religion: ſuch men forget the dreadful denunciation of Chriſt againſt thoſe that ſhall *be aſhamed of him and his words.* Mark 8. 38.

7. As for thoſe, who upon a juſter eſtimate, find the advantages of Piety worthy to be choſen, and take it with all its acceſſory ignominies, they have the encouragement of very good company in their ſufferings. The Pſalmiſt long ago had his ſhare, when not only *Thoſe that ſate in the gate ſpake againſt him, but drunkards made ſongs upon him,* Pſalm 69. 12. 'Twas alſo the Prophet *Jeremie's* complaint, *I am in deriſion dayly, every one mocketh me,* Jer 20. 7. Nay our bleſſed Lord himſelf was derided in his life by the Phariſees, Luke 16. 14. mocked and reviled at his death by the Prieſts, the Elders, the ſoldiers; nay by

by caſual paſſengers, Mat. 27. 39. And ſhall the ſervant think himſelf greater than his Lord? Shall a Chriſtian expect an immunity from what his Saviour has born before him? (He that do's ſo is too delicate a member for a crucified head.) No ſure, let us rather animate our ſelves, as the Apoſtle exhorts, by *conſidering him who as* well *deſpiſed the ſhame*, as *endured the croſs for us*, Heb. 12. 2. and who has not only given an example, but propoſed a reward, a beatitude to thoſe who are *reviled for righteouſneſs ſake*, Matth. 5. 11. And when this is ſoberly ponder'd, 'twill ſure make it eaſy for us to reſolve with holy *David* in a like caſe, *I will be yet more vile*, 2 Sam. 6. 22.

8. BUT to return from this digreſſion to thoſe who thus unhappily employ their parts, let me propoſe to them, that they would borrow every day ſome few minutes from their mirth, and ſeriouſly conſider, whether this be (I need not ſay a Chriſtian, but) a manly exerciſe of their faculties. Alas! when they have rallied out the day from one company to another, they may ſum up their account at night in the wiſe mans ſi-

mile, their *laughter has bin but like the crackling of thorns under a pot*, Eccleſ. 7. 6. made a little brisk noiſe for the preſent, and with the ſparkles perhaps annoied their neighbours, but what real good has it brought to themſelves? All that they can fancy is but the repute of Wit. But ſure that might be attainable ſome other way. We find the world affected to new things, and this of *deriſion* and abuſe to others, is ſo beaten a road, that perhaps the very variety of a new way would render it acceptable. They are the lighter ſubſtances that ſtill ſwim away with the ſtream, the greater and more ſolid bodies do ſometimes ſtop the current: and ſure 'twere a noble eſſay of a mans parts to ſtem this tide, and by a more uſeful application of his own faculties, convince others that theirs might be better emploied. 'Tis ſaid of *Anacharſis*, that at a feaſt he could not be got to ſmile at the affected ralleries of common Jeſters, but when an ape was brought in he freely laught, ſaying, an ape was ridiculous by nature, but men by art and ſtudy. And truly 'tis a great contemt of humane nature to think their intellects were given them for

for no better end than to raiſe that laughter, which a brute can do as well and better.

9. I would not be thought to recommend ſuch a Stoical ſourneſs, as ſhall admit of nothing of the cheerful pleaſant part of converſation. God has not ſure bin more rigid to our minds than to our bodies: and as he has not ſo devoted the one to toil, but that he allows us ſome time to exerciſe them in recreation as well as labors, ſo doubtleſs he indulges the ſame relaxation to our minds: which are not alwaies to be ſcrued up to the height, but allowed to deſcend to thoſe eaſineſſes of Converſe, which entertain the lower faculties of the Soul. Nor do I think thoſe are ill emploied in thoſe little skirmiſhes of Wit, which paſs familiarly between intimates and acquaintances, which beſides the preſent divertiſement, ſerve to whet and quicken the fancy. Yet I conceive this liberty is to be bounded with ſome cautions: as firſt in theſe encounters, the charge ſhould be powder, not bullet; there ſhould nothing be ſaid that ſhould leave any ungrateful impreſſions, or give any umbrage of a ſpightful intent. The world

wants

wants not experiments of the miſchiefs have happened by too ſevere ralleries: in ſuch fencing jeſt has proved earneſt, and *florets* have oft turn'd to ſwords, and not only the friendſhip but the men have fallen a ſacrifice to a jeſt.

10. SECONDLY this is to have the ſame reſtriction with all other recreations, that it be made a divertiſement, not a trade. 'Tis an inſinuating thing, and is apt to encroach too much upon our time, and God knows we have a great deal of buſineſs of this world, and much more for the next, which will not be done with laughing, and therefore 'tis not for us to play away too much of that time, which is exacted by more ſerious concerns. 'Tis ſure we ſhall die in earneſt, and it will not become us to live altogether in jeſt. But beſides this ſtealth of our time, 'tis apt to ſteal away mens hearts too, make them ſo dote upon this kind of entertainment, that it averts them from any thing more ſerious. I believe I may appeal to ſome who have made this their buſineſs, whether it go not againſt the hair with them to ſet to any thing elſe: and having eſpouſed this as their one excellence, they are willing to de-

cry

cry all other, that they may the more value themſelves upon this. By this means it is, that the gift of Rallery has in this age, like the lean kine, devoured all the more ſolid worthy qualifications; and is counted the moſt reputable accompliſhment. A ſtrange inverted eſtimate, thus to prefer the little ebullitions of wit, before ſolid reaſon and judgment. If they would accommodate their diet at the ſame rate, they ſhall eat the huſk, rather than the kernel, and drink nothing but froth and bubbles. But after all, Wiſdom is commonly at long running juſtified even of her deſpiſers; theſe great idolaters of Wit often daſhing themſelves upon ſuch rocks, as make them too late wiſh, their ſails had bin leſs, and their ballaſt more. For the preventing therefore of more ſuch wrecks, I wiſh the preſent caution may be more adverted to, not to beſtow an unproportionable part of our time or value on this ſlight exerciſe of mans ſlighteſt faculty.

11. A third Caution in this matter, is to confine our ſelves to preſent company, not to make abſent perſons the ſubject of our mirth. Thoſe freedoms we uſe

uſe to a mans face as they are commonly more moderate, ſo they are more equitable, becauſe we expoſe our ſelves to the like from him; but the back blows are diſingenuous, and give ſuſpicicion we intend not a fair tryal of Wit, but a cowardly murder of a mans fame. 'Twas the precept of the Philoſopher, *Deride not the abſent*, and I think it may well be ſo to the Politician: there being nothing more imprudent as to our civil concerns than the contrary liberty. For thoſe things never die in the company they are firſt vented in (nay perhaps the hearer is not willing his wit ſhould ſo ſoon expire;) and when they once take air, they quickly come to the notice of the *derided* perſon, and then nothing in the world is more diſobliging. 'Twas a ſober precept given one, not ſo much as to laugh in compliance with him that *derides* another, for you will be hated by him he *derides*. And if an acceſſory be hated, ſure much more the principal: and I think I may ſay, there are many can ſooner forgive a ſolemn deep contrivance againſt them, than one of their jocular reproches: for he that deſigns ſeems to acknowledge them conſiderable, but he that

that mocks them, ſeems to think them too low for any thing but contemt: and we learn from *Ariſtotle*, that the meaſure of anger is entirely taken thence; men being ſo far provoked, as they imagine they were ſlighted or affronted. In mere ſecular wiſdom it will therefore become men to conſider, whether this trade be like to turn to account, or whether it be worth the while, at once to make a jeſt and an enemy.

12. AND if it be imprudent to make man our enemy, 'tis much more to make God ſo, by levelling our blows at any thing ſacred: but of that I have already had occaſion to ſpeak, and ſhall not repete; only give me leave to ſay, that beſides the profaner ſorts of jeſts, which more immediately reflect on him, he is concern'd in all the unjuſt reproches of our brethren; our love to them being confirm'd by the ſame divine ſanction with our reverence to him: and ſure nothing is more inconſiſtent with that love, than the expoſing them to that contemt we are our ſelves ſo impatient of. In a word what repute ſoever this practice now has of wit, it is very far from wiſdom to provoke God that we may alſo

diſoblige man: and if we will take the Scripture eſtimate, we ſhall find a ſcorner is no ſuch honorable epithet as we ſeem to account it. *Solomon* do's almoſt conſtantly ſet it in oppoſition to a Wiſe man: thus it is, Prov. 9. 8. and again Chap. 13. 1. and many other places; and on the other ſide cloſely links it with the fool: and that not only in title, but in puniſhment too, *Judgments are prepared for Scorners, and ſtripes for the back of Fools*, Prov. 19. 29. So that if our wits think not *Solomon* too dull for their cabal, we ſee what a turn he will give to their preſent verdict.

13. And if theſe reproaches which aim only at oſtentation of Wit, be ſo unjuſtifiable, what ſhall we ſay to thoſe, that are drawn with blacker lines, that are founded in malice or envy, or ſome undermining deſign? Every man that is to be ſupplanted cannot alwaies be attaqued with a down-right battery: perhaps his integrity may be ſuch, that, as 'twas ſaid of *Daniel* Chap. 6. 4. *They can find no occaſion againſt him*: and when they cannot ſhake the main fort, they muſt try if they can poſſeſs themſelves of the out-works, raiſe ſome prejudice againſt

againſt his diſcretion, his humor, his carriage, and his moſt extrinſic adherents, and if by repreſenting him ridiculous in any of theſe they can but abate mens reverence to him, their confidence of him will not long hold out; bare honeſty without ſome other adornment, being lookt on as a leafleſs-tree, no body will truſt himſelf to its ſhelter. Thus the enemies of *Socrates*, when they could no other waies ſuppreſs his reputation, hired *Ariſtophanes* a comic Poet to perſonate him on the ſtage, and by the inſinuations of thoſe interludes, inſenſibly conveied firſt a contemt, and then an hatred of him into the hearts of the people. But I need not bring inſtances of former times in this matter, theſe being ſufficiently verſt in that myſtery.

14. IT is not ſtrange that men of ſuch deſigns, ſhould ſummon all their wit, to the ſervice, make their ralleries as piquant as they can, that they may wound the deeper: but methinks 'tis but a mean office they aſſign their Wit, to be (I will not ſay the Pander, that being in this age ſcarce a title of reproach, but) the executioner or hang-man to their malice. Chriſt bids us *be wiſe as ſerpents*, yet

adds withall *harmleſs as doves*; Mat. 10. 16. but here the ſerpent has quite eat up the dove, and puts a vultur in the place, a creature of ſuch ſagacity and diligence in purſuit of the prey, that 'tis hard for any art or innocence to eſcape its talons.

15. THERE is yet another ſort of contumelious perſons, who indeed are not chargeable with that circumſtance, of ill employing their wit, for they uſe none in it. Theſe are people whoſe ſole talent is Pride and Scorn; who perhaps have attained the ſciences of dreſſing themſelves finely and eating well, and upon the ſtrength of thoſe excellences, look faſtidiouſly, and ſpeak diſdainfully of any who want them; concluding if a man fall ſhort of their garniture at the knees and elbowes, he is much inferiour to them in the furniture of his head. Such people think crying, O ridiculous! is an ample confutation of any thing can be ſaid; and ſo they can but deſpiſe enough, are contented not to be able to ſay why they do ſo. Theſe are, I confeſs, the moſt innocent kind of *deriders* in reſpect of others, what they ſay having not edge enough to

to cauſe any ſmart. The greateſt hurt they do is to themſelves, who tho they much need, yet are generally little capable of a reſcue, and therefore I ſhall not clog the preſent diſcourſe with any advice to them: I ſhall chuſe rather to conclude with enforcing my ſuit to the former, that they would ſoberly and ſadly weigh the account they muſt one day give of the emploiment of their parts, and the more they have hitherto embeazled them, the more to endeavour to expiate that unthriftineſs, by a more careful managery for the future; that ſo inſtead of that vain, empty, vaniſhing mirth they have courted here, they may find a real, full, and eternal ſatisfaction in the joy of their Lord.

SECT.

Sect. VIII.

Of Flattery.

1. THE laſt of Verbal injuries to our neighbour which I ſhall mention, is *Flattery*. This is indeed the fatalleſt wound of the Tongue, carries leaſt ſmart but infinitely more of danger, and is as much ſuperior to the former, as a gangrene is to a ſcall or ſcratch; this may be ſore and vexing, but that ſtupifying and deadly. Flattery is ſuch a myſtery, ſuch a riddle of iniquity, that its very ſoftneſſes are its cruelleſt rigor, its balm corrodes, and (to comprize all in the Pſalmiſts excellent deſcription) *its words are ſmoother then oil, and yet be they very ſwords.* Pſalm 55. 21.

2. BUT beſides the miſchiefs of it to the Patient, 'tis the moſt diſhonouring, the moſt vilifying thing to the Agent. I ſhall not need to empanel a jury either of Moraliſts or Divines; every mans

mans own breaſt ſufficiently inſtructing him in the unworthineſs of it. 'Tis indeed a collective accumulative baſeneſs, it being in its elements a compound and a complex of the moſt ſordid, hateful qualities incident to mankind. I ſhall inſtance in three, *viz.* Lying, Servility, and Treachery, which being deteſtably deform'd ſingle, muſt in conjunction make up a loathſom monſtruous guilt. Now tho *Flattery* has two branches, yet theſe lie ſo at the root as equally to influence both: for whether you take it as it is the giving of praiſe where it is not due, or the profeſſing of kindneſs which is not real, theſe properties are ſtill its conſtitutive parts.

3. AND firſt we may take Lying to be the very corner Stone of the Fabric; for take it away, and the whole falls to the ground. A Paraſite would make but a lean trade of it, that ſhould confine himſelf to truth. For tho 'tis poſſible ſo to order the manner and circumſtances, as to flatter even in the repreſenting a mans real virtues to him, yet commonly if they do not falſify as to the kind, they are forc'd to do it as to the degree. Beſides as there are but

but few ſuch ſubjects of *Flattery*, ſo neither are men of that worth ſo receptive of it. Such ſort of addreſſes are leſs dangerous to thoſe who have the perſpicacity to ſee thro them: ſo that theſe merchants are under a neceſſity of dealing with the more ignorant chapmen, and with them their counterfeit wares will go off beſt. It is indeed ſtrange to conſider, with what groſs impudent falſhoods men of this trade will court their Patrons. How many in former ages have not only amaſs'd together all ſublunary excellences, but have even ranſacked heaven to ſupply their *Flattery*, deified their Princes, and perſwaded them they were gods, who at laſt found they were to die like men? And tho this ſtrein be now out-dated, yet perhaps 'tis not that the vice is grown more modeſt, but that Atheiſm has rob'd it of that Topic. Thoſe that believe no God, would rather ſeem to annihilate than magnify the perſon to whom they ſhould apply the title. But I do not find that the practice has any other bounds. A great man's vices ſhall ſtill be called virtues; his deformities, beauties; and his moſt abſurd follies, the height of ingenuity. Such a

ſubtil

ſubtil Alchymiſt is this Paraſite, that he turns all he touches into gold, imaginary indeed as to the deluded perſon, but oft-times real to himſelf. Nor is Lying leſs natural to the other part of *Flattery*, the profeſſion of ſervice and kindneſs. This needs no evidencing, and to attemt it would be a ſelf-confutation: for if thoſe profeſſions be true, they are not *Flattery*; therefore if they be *Flattery*, they muſt needs be Lies. It will be almoſt as needleſs to expatiate on the baſeneſs and meaneſs of that ſin; for tho there is no ſubject that affords more matter for declamation, yet Lying is a thing that is aſhamed of it ſelf, and therefore may well be remitted to its own convictions. 'Tis *Ariſtotle*'s obſervation, that all Elements but the Earth, had ſome Philoſopher or other, that gave it his vote to be the firſt productive Principle of all things: and I think we may now ſay, that all Crimes have had their abettors and fautors, ſome body that would ſtand up in their defence; only Lying is ſo much the dregs and refuſe of wickedneſs, that none has yet had Chymiſtry enough to ſublimate it, to bring it into ſuch a reputation, that any man

will think fit to own it: the greater wonder that what is under ſo univerſal a reproach, ſhould be ſo commonly admitted in practice. But by this we may make an eſtimate, what the whole body of *Flattery* is, when in one limb of it we find ſo much corruption.

4. A ſecond is Servility and Abjectneſs of humor: and of this there needs no other proof than has been already given; this charge being implicitly involv'd in the former of Lying, the condeſcending to that, being a mark of a diſingenuous ſpirit. And accordingly the nobler heathens lookt on it as the vice of ſlaves and vaſſals, below the liberty of a free man, as well as an honeſt. But tho I need no other evidence to make good the accuſation, yet every ſycophant furniſhes me with many ſupernumerary proofs. Look upon ſuch an one, and you ſhall ſee his eies immoveably fixt on his patrons face, watching each look, each glance, and in every change of his countenance (like a ſtar-gazer) reading his own deſtiny, his ears chain'd (like gally-ſlaves at the oar) to his dictates, ſucking in the moſt inſipid diſcourſes with as much greedineſs, as if they were the apophthegms of the

the ſeven ſages, his tongue tun'd only to panegyrics and acclamations, his feet in winged motion upon every nod or other ſignification of his pleaſure: in a word, his whole body (as if it had no other animal ſpirits than what it derived from him) varies its poſtures, its exerciſes, as he finds agreeable to the humor he is to ſerve. And can humanity contrive to abaſe it ſelf more? Yes it can, and do's too often, by enſlaving its diviner part too, taking up not only opinions, but even crimes alſo in compliance, playing the incarnate devil, and helping to act thoſe villanies which Satan can only ſuggeſt: and if this be not a ſtate of abject ſlavery, ſure there is none in the world. *Plutarch* tells us, that *Philoxenus* for deſpiſing ſome dull Poetry of *Dionyſius*'s, was by him condemned to dig in the quarries: from whence being by the mediation of friends remanded, at his return *Dionyſius* produced ſome other of his verſes, which as ſoon as *Philoxenus* had read, he made no reply, but calling to the waiters, ſaid, *Let them carry me again to the quarries.* And if an heathen Poet could prefer a corporeal ſlavery before a mental, what name of

reproach is low enough for thoſe, who can ſubmit to both, in puſuit of thoſe poor ſordid advantages they project by their *Flatteries*. Nor is this baſeneſs more obſervable in theſe mean fawnings and obſervances; than it is in the proteſtations of kindneſs and friendſhip. Love is the greateſt gift any man has to beſtow, and Friendſhip the ſacredeſt of all moral bonds: and to proſtitute theſe to little pitiful deſigns, is ſure one of the baſeſt cheats we can put upon our common nature, in thus debaſing her pureſt and moſt current coin, which by theſe frequent adulterations is become ſo ſuſpected, that ſcarce any man knows what he receives. But chriſtian Charity is yet worſe uſed in the caſe: for that obliging to all ſincerity, is hereby induced to give gold for droſs, to exhibite that *Love indeed, and in truth*, which is returned only *in word and in tongue*, 1 Joh. 3. 18. And ſo it do's in thoſe who obſerve its rules: but in thoſe who own, yet obſerve them not, 'tis yet a greater ſufferer, by labouring under the ſcandal of all their diſſimulations. It was once the character given Chriſtians, even by their enemies, *Behold*

how

how they love one another! but God knows we may now be pointed out by a very differing mark, *Behold how they deceive and delude one another*! And ſure this violation we herein offer to our religion, do's not allay but aggravate the baſeneſs of this practice: for if in the other we ſell our ſelves, in this we ſell our God too, ſacrifice our intereſt in him to get a ſurreptitious title to the favor of a man. And this I conceive do's in the ſecond place not much commend the art of *Flattery*, which is built up of ſo vile materials.

5. AND to compleat this infamous compoſition, in the third place Treachery comes in; a crime of ſo odious a kind, that to name it is to implead it: yet how intrinſic a part this is of *Flattery*, will need no great skill to evidence, daily experience ſufficiently doing it. 'Tis a common obſervation of *Flatterers*, that they are like the Heliotrope, open only towards the ſun, but ſhut and contract themſelves at night, and in cloudy weather. Let the object of their adoration be but eclipſed, they can ſee none of thoſe excellences which before dazled their eies: and however inconſtant they may

may ſeem in it to others, they are indeed very conſtant to themſelves, true to their fixt principle, of courting the greatneſs, not the man; in purſuit whereof their old idol is often made a ſacrifice to their new: all malicious diſcovery is made of their falling friend, to buy an intereſt in the riſing one. Of this there are ſuch crouds of examples in ſtory, that it would be impertinent to ſingle out any, eſpecially in an age that is fitter to furniſh precedents for the future, than to borrow of the paſt times. But ſuppoſing the Paraſite not actually guilty of this baſe revolt (which yet he ſeldom fails to be upon occaſion) yet is he no leſs treacherous even in the height of his blandiſhments; and while he moſt courts a man, he do's the moſt ruinouſly undermine him. For firſt he abuſes him in his underſtanding, precludes him from that which wiſe men have judged the moſt eſſential part of Learning, the knowledge of himſelf, from which 'tis the main buſineſs of the *Flatterer* to divert him. And to this abuſe there is another inevitably conſequent: for this ignorance of his faults or follies, neceſſarily condemns him to the continuing in them, it being impoſſible

poſſible for him to think of correcting either the one or the other, who is made believe he has neither. This is like the treachery of a bribed officer in a gariſon, who will not let the weak parts be fortified, and laies the man as open to aſſaults as that doth the town. Yet this is not all, he do's not only provide for the continuance, but the improving of his crimes and errors, which alas! are too prolific of themſelves, but being cultivated and manured with perpetual ſoothings and encouragements, grow immeaſurably luxuriant. And accordingly we ſee that men uſed only to applauſes, are ſo ſwell'd with them, that their inſolences are intolerable. And this they are ſometimes taught to their coſt, when they happen among free men, who will not ſubmit to all they ſay, nor commend all they do. And finding theſe uneaſy contradictions when they come abroad, they are willing to retire to their moſt complaiſant company: and ſo this ſycophant devil having once got them within his circle, may enchant them as he pleaſes, lead them from one wickedneſs to another. And as *Caligula* and other voluptuous Emperours, by being adored

as

as Gods, ſunk in their ſenſuality below the nature of man; ſo theſe celebrated perſons are by that falſe veneration animated to all thoſe reproachful practices, which may expoſe them to a real contemt: their follies, as well as their vices ſtill get head, till they anſwer the deſcription the wiſeman gives of the old Giants, *Who fell away in the ſtrength of their fooliſhneſs.* Eccl. 16. 7.

6. And ſure he that betraies a man to all theſe miſchiefs, may well be thought perfidious. But that which infinitly amplifies and enhances the Treachery is, that all this is acted under the notion and diſguiſe of a friend; a relation ſo venerable, that methinks 'tis the neareſt ſecular tranſcript of the treaſon, which is ſtoried of thoſe who have adminiſtred poiſon in the Euchariſt. The name of a friend is ſuch an endearment, as nothing humane can equal. All other natural or civil ties take their greateſt force from this. What ſignifies an unfriendly parent, or brother, or wife? 'Tis friendſhip only that is the cement which really and effectively combines mankind: and therefore we may obſerve, that God reckoning up other relations, illuſtrates them by

by ſeveral notes of endearment, but when he comes to that of friendſhip, 'tis *the friend who is as thine own ſoul*, Deut. 13. 6. nothing below the higheſt inſtance was thought expreſſive enough of that union. What a legion of fiends then poſſeſſeth men that can break theſe chains Mark 5. 4. nay that can hammer and forge thoſe very chains into daggers and *ſtiletto's*, and make their friendſhip an engine of ruine? This is certainly the blackeſt color wherein we can view a Paraſite, his falſe light makes the ſhadow the more diſmal. As the Ape has a peculiar deformity above other brutes by that aukward and ungraceful reſemblance he has to a man, ſo ſure a *Flatterer* is infinitely the more hateful for being the ugly counterfeit of a Friend. And as this treachery lies at the bottom of the panegyrics, ſo alſo do's it of all the careſſes and exuberant kindneſs of a *Flatterer*, which if they aimed not at any particular end of circumvention, muſt yet in the general be treacherous by being falſe. A man looks on the love of his friend as one of the richeſt poſſeſſions (upon which account the Philoſopher thought friends were to be inventoried as well as goods.)

What a defeat and diſcomfiture is it to a man when he comes to uſe this wealth, to find it all falſe metall, ſuch as will not anſwer any of thoſe purpoſes for which he depended on it. There cannot ſure be a greater treachery, than firſt to raiſe a confidence and then deceive it. But beſides this fundamental falſeneſs, there are alſo many incidental treacheries, which fall in upon occaſion of particular deſigns. A pretence of kindneſs is the univerſal ſtale to all baſe projects: by this men are rob'd of their fortunes, and women of their honor: in a word all the wolfiſh deſigns walk under this ſheeps clothing; and as the world goes, men have more need to beware of thoſe who own themſelves friends, than thoſe who own themſelves enemies.

7. THESE are the lineaments of this vice of *Flattery*, which ſure do together make up a face of moſt extreme deformity. I might upon a true account add another, and charge it with folly too: I am ſure according to the divine eſtimate it is alwaies ſo: and truly it do's not ſeldom prove in the ſecular alſo. Men of this art do ſometimes drop their vizard before they have got the prize, and

and then there is nothing in the world that appears ſo contemtible, ſo ſilly; a barefaced *Flatterer* being every bodies ſcorn. The ſhort is, wherever this game is plaied there is alwaies a fool in the caſe: if the paraſite be detected, it falls to his ſhare: if he be not, to his whom he deludes. But at the beſt 'tis but ſubtilty and cunning he can boaſt of; and if he can in his own fancy raiſe that to the opinion of true Wiſdom, 'tis a ſign he is come round to practiſe his deceits upon himſelf, and is as much his own *Flatterer* as he has bin others.

8. AND now I know not whether it be more ſhame or wonder, to ſee that men can ſo put off ingenuity, and the native greatneſs of their kind, as to deſcend to ſo baſe, ſo ignoble a vice: yet alas! we daily ſee it done, and that not only by the ſcum and refuſe of the people, ſuch as *Job* ſpeaks of, *who are viler then the earth*, Cap. 30. 8. but by perſons of all conditions. *Flattery* like a ſpring forc'd upwards aſcends, as cares are by the wiſe man ſaid to deſcend, Eccluſ. 40. 4. *from him that weareth a linen frock to him that weareth a crown*: all intermedial degrees are but like pipes, which as they

ſuck from below, ſo tranſmit it ſtill upwards. There are few ſo low but find ſome body to cajole and flatter them. Some intereſt or other may ſometimes be to be ſerv'd even upon the meaneſt, and thoſe that find themſelves thus ſolicited for benefits, are eaſily taught by it how to addreſs to their immediate ſuperiors, from whom they expect greater: and as 'tis thus handed from one rank to another, the art ſtill is more ſubtilized and refined (God help poor Princes the while, who commonly meet with the elixir, and quinteſſence of this venim:) and thus it paſſes thro all ſtates and conditions: as they are paſſive on the one ſide, and are flattered by ſome, ſo they are active on the other, and *flatter* others.

9. I ſay all conditions, I do not ſay all perſons in thoſe conditions, for no truly generous ſoul can ſtoop ſo low: but 'tis evident to what a low ebb Generoſity as well as Chriſtianity is grown, by the numbers of thoſe who thus degrade themſelſelves, every little petty intereſt being thought worth theſe baſe ſubmiſſions. And truly it is hard to find, by what topic of perſwaſion to aſſault ſuch men. The meanneſs, or the ſin will ſcarce be diſſwa-

ſives

ſives to thoſe who have reconciled themſelves to both: if any thing can be pertinently ſaid to them, it muſt be upon the ſcore of intereſt, for that being their grand principle, they can with no pretence diſclaim the inferences drawn thence.

10 LET them therefore duly ballance the advantages they project from this practice with the miſchiefs and dangers of it. What they expect is commonly either Honour or Wealth, theſe they hope may be acquired by their proſtrations to thoſe, who can diſpenſe or procure them. 'Tis true, as Honor ſignifies greatneſs and power, it is ſometimes attain'd by it, but then as it ſignifies reputation and eſteem, 'tis as ſure to be loſt. He that thus aſcends, may be lookt on with fear, but never with reverence. Now I think 'tis no good bargain to exchange this ſecond notion of honour for the firſt: for beſides the difference in the intrinſic value, 'tis to be conſider'd how tottering a pinacle unmerited greatneſs is. He that rais'd him to ſatisfy his humor at one time, can (with more eaſe and equal juſtice) throw him down at another: and when ſuch a man do's fall, he

he falls as without pity, ſo without remedy, has no foundation on which to rebuild his fortune. His ſycophanting arts being detected, that game is not to be plaid the ſecond time: whereas a man of a clear reputation, tho his barque be ſplit, yet he ſaves his cargo, has ſomething left towards ſetting up again, and ſo is in capacity of receiving benefit not only from his own induſtry, but the friendſhip of others. A ſound piece of Timber, if it be not thought fit for one uſe, yet will be laid by for another: and an honeſt man will probably at one time or other be thought good for ſomething.

11. As for the other aim, that of Wealth, 'tis very poſſible that may ſometimes be compaſſed; and well it may, the *Flatterer*, having ſeveral ſprings to feed it by. For he that has a great Patron, has the advantage of his countenance and authority, he has that of his bounty and liberality, and he has another (ſometimes greater than both) that of his negligence and deceivableneſs. But yet all theſe acquiſitions are many times like *Fairy* mony, what is brought one night is taken away the next. Men of this mold ſeldom

dom know how to bear proſperity temperately, and it is no new thing to ſee a Privado carry it ſo high, as to awaken the jealouſie of his promter, which being aſſiſted by the buſy induſtry of thoſe who envy his fortune, 'twill be eaſy enough to find ſome flaw in his gettings, by which to unravel the whole Web: an event that is oft experimentted not only in the private managery of families, but in the moſt public adminiſtrations. And theſe are ſuch hazards, that laid altogether would much recommend to any the moral of *Horace*'s Fable, and make one chuſe the Country-mouſes plain fare and ſafety, rather than the delicacies of the City with ſo much danger. This then is the ſtate of the proſperous Paraſite: but alas! how many are there who never arrive to this, but are kickt down ere they have climb'd the two or three firſt rounds of the Ladder, whoſe deſigns are ſo humble as not to aſpire above a *Major-duomo*, or ſome ſuch domeſtic preferment, (for in this trade there are adventures of all ſizes.) But upon all theſe conſiderations, methinks it appears no very inviting one to any. At the long run

run an honeſt freedom of ſpeech will more recommend a man, than all theſe ſneaking *Flatteries*: we have a very wiſe mans word for it, *He that rebuketh a man, afterwards ſhall find more favor, then he that* flattereth *with the tongue*, Prov. 28. 23.

12. BUT after all that hath or can be ſaid, the ſuppreſſion of *Flattery* will moſt depend upon thoſe perſons to whom it is addreſt: if it be not repuls'd there, nothing elſe will diſcourage it; and if it be, 'tis cruſht in the egg, and can produce no viper. Theſe vulturs prey only on carcaſſes, on ſuch ſtupid minds, as have not life and vigor enough to fright them away. Let but perſons of quality entertain ſuch cuſtomers with a ſevere brow, with ſome ſmart expreſſion of diſlike, thoſe Leeches will immediately fall off. In *Sparta* when all laws againſt theft prov'd ineffectual, at laſt they fixt the penalty on them that were rob'd, and by that did the buſineſs: and in the preſent caſe, if 'twere made as infamous to be *flattered* as 'tis to *flatter*, I believe it might have the like effect. Indeed there is pretence enough to make it ſo: for firſt as to Wit, the advantage is clear on the *Flatterers* ſide

ſide: he muſt be allowed to have more of that (which in this age is more than a counter-poiſe to honeſty;) and as for virtue, the ballance (as to the principal motive) ſeems to hang pretty even: 'tis the vice of avarice that tempts the one to *flatter*, and the vice of pride that makes it acceptable to the other. The truth is, there is the bottom of the matter: 'tis that ſecret confederate within, that expoſes men to thoſe aſſaults from without. We have generally ſuch an appetite to praiſe, that we greedily ſuck it in without ſtaying to examine whether it belong to us or no, or whether it be deſign'd as a kindneſs, or an abuſe. Other injuries ruſh upon us with violence, and give us notice of their aproach: they may be ſaid to come *like water into our bowels*; *but this like oyl into our bones*, Pſal. 109. 18. penetrates eaſily, undiſcernibly, by help of that native propenſion we have to receive it. 'Tis therefore the near concern of all, eſpecially of thoſe whoſe quality moſt expoſes them, to keep a guard upon that treacherous in-mate, not to let that ſtep into the ſcale to make a baſe ſycophant out-weigh a true friend, and when ever they are atacqued with extra-

vagant encomium's, let them fortify themſelves with this dilemma, either they have thoſe excellences they are praiſed for, or they have not, if they have not, 'tis an apparent cheat and gull, and he is of a pitiful forlorn underſtanding that delights to be fool'd: but if they have, they are too good to be expoſed to ſuch worms who will inſtantly wither the faireſt gourd, Jon. 4. 7.

For as it is ſaid of the *Grand Signior*, that no graſs grows where his horſe once treads: ſo we may ſay of the *Flatterer*, no virtue ever proſpers where he is admitted: if he find any, he hugs it till he ſtifles it, if he find none, he ſo indiſpoſes the ſoil, that no future ſeeds can ever take root. In fine, he is a miſchief beyond the deſcription of any character. O let not men then act this part to themſelves by being their own Paraſites! and then 'twill be an eaſy thing to eſcape all others.

SECT.

SECT. IX.

Of Boaſting.

WE have now ſeen ſome effects of an ungovern'd Tongue, as they relate to God and our Neighbour. There is yet a third ſort which reflect upon a mans ſelf. So unboundedly miſchievous is that petulant member, that heaven and earth are not wide enough for its range, but it will find work at home too; and like the viper, that after it had devoured its companions, prey'd upon its ſelf, ſo it corrodes inward, and becomes often as fatal to its owner, as to all the world beſides.

2. OF this there are as many inſtances, as there are imprudent things ſaid, for all ſuch have the worſt reflection upon the ſpeaker: and therefore all that have given rules for civil life, have in order to it put very ſevere reſtraints upon the tongue, that it run not before the judgment. 'Twas the advice of *Zeno* to

dip the Tongue in the mind before one ſhould permit it to ſpeak. *Theophraſtus* uſed to ſay, *It was ſafer truſting to an unbridled horſe, than to intemperate ſpeech.* And daily experience confirms the Aphoriſm; for thoſe that ſet no guard upon their Tongues, are hurried by them into a thouſand indecencies, and very often into real conſiderable miſchiefs. By this means men have proved their own delators, diſcovered their own moſt important ſecrets: and whereas their heart ſhould have kept a lock upon their Tongue, they have given their Tongue the key of their heart, and the event has bin oft as unhappy as the proceeding was prepoſterous. There are indeed ſo many waies for men to loſe themſelves in their talk, that I ſhould do the like if I ſhould pretend to trace them. Beſides my ſubject leads me not to diſcourſe Ethically, but Chriſtianly of the faults of the Tongue, and therefore I have all along conſidered the one no farther than it happens to be twiſted with the other.

3. In the preſent caſe I ſhall inſiſt only upon one fault of the Tongue, which partakes of both kinds, and is at once

a vice and a folly, I mean that of *Boaſting* and vaunting a mans ſelf: a ſtrain to which ſome mens tongues have a wonderful glibneſs. No diſcourſe can be adminiſtred, but they will try to turn the tide, and draw it all into their own chanel, by entertaining you with long ſtories of themſelves: or if there be no room for that, they will at leaſt ſcrew in here and there ſome intimations of what they did or ſaid. Yea ſo ſtupid a vanity is this, that it works alike upon all materials: not only their greater and more illuſtrious acts or ſentences, but even their moſt ſlight and trivial occurrences, by being theirs, they think acquire a conſiderableneſs, and are forcibly impoſed upon the company; the very dreams of ſuch people ſtreight commence propheſy, and are as ſeriouſly related as if they were undoubted revelations. And ſure if we reflect upon our Saviors rule, that *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh*, we cannot but think theſe men are very full of themſelves; and to be ſo, is but another phraſe for being very proud. So 'tis pride in the heart, which is the ſpring that feeds this perpetual current at the mouth, and under that notion we are to conſider it.

4. AND

4. And truly there is nothing can render it more infamous; Pride being a vice that of all others is the moſt branded in Scripture as moſt deteſtable to God, and is ſignaliz'd by the puniſhment to be ſo. This turned *Lucifer* out of heaven, *Nebuchadnezzar* out of his throne, nay out of humane ſociety. And indeed it ſeems ſtill to have ſomething of the ſame effect, nothing rendring a man ſo inconſiderable; for it ſets him above the meaner ſort of company, and makes him intolerable to the better, and to complete the parallel, he ſeldom comes to know himſelf till he be turn'd a grazing, be reduced to ſome extremities.

5. But this *Boaſting* arrogant humor, tho alwaies bad, yet is more or leſs ſo according to the ſubject on which it works. If it be only on natural excellences, as Beauty, Wit; or accidental acquiſitions, as Honor, Wealth, or the like, yet even here 'tis not only a theft, but a ſacrilege; the glory of thoſe being due only to the Donor, not to the receiver, there being not ſo much as any pre-diſpoſition in the ſubject to determine Gods bounty. He could have made the moſt deformed beggar as handſom

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and as rich, as thoſe who moſt pride themſelves in their Wealth and Beauty. No man fancies himſelf to be his own Creator, and tho ſome have aſſumed to be the architects of their own fortunes, yet the frequent defeats of mens induſtry and contrivance, do ſufficiently confute that bold pretence, and evince, that there is ſomething above them, which can either blaſt or proſper their attemts. What an invaſion then is it of Gods right, to engroſs the honor of thoſe things being done, which were not at all in their power to do? And ſure their folly is as great in reſpect of men, as the ſin is towards God. This *boaſting*, like an heavy nurſe, overlaies the child: the vanity of that quite drowns the notice of the things in which it is founded; and men are not ſo apt to ſay, ſuch a man is handſom, wiſe, or great, as that he is proud upon the fancy of being ſo. In a word he that celebrates his own excellencies, muſt be content with his own applauſes, for he will get none of others, unleſs it be from thoſe fawning ſycophants, whoſe praiſes are worſe than the bittereſt Detraction.

6. And yet ſo ſottiſh a vice is Pride, that

that it can make even thoſe inſidious flatteries matter of *boaſt*, which is a much more irrational object of it than the former. How eagerly do ſome men propagate every little encomium their Paraſites make of them? With what guſt and ſenſuality will they tell how ſuch a jeſt of theirs took, or ſuch a magnificence was admired? 'Tis pleaſant to ſee what little arts and dexterities they have to wind in ſuch things into diſcourſe: when alas! it amounts to no more than this, that ſome have thought them fools enough to be flatter'd, and 'tis odds but the hearers will think them enough ſo to be laught at.

7. BUT there is yet another ſubject of *boaſting* more fooliſh and more criminal too, than either of the former, and that is when men vaunt of their piety, which if it were true, were yet leſs owing to themſelves than any natural endowment. For tho we do not at all aſſiſt towards them, yet do we neither obſtruct; but in the operations of Grace 'tis otherwiſe; we have there a principle of oppoſition, and God never makes us his own till he ſubdue that: and tho he do it not by an irreſiſtible force, but by ſuch

ſuch ſweet and gentle inſinuations, that we are ſometimes captivated ere we are aware: yet that do's not impeach his right of conqueſt, but only ſhews him the more gracious conqueror. 'Tis true in reſpect of the event we have great cauſe of exultance and joy, Gods ſervice being the moſt perfect freedom: yet in regard of the efficiency, we have as little matter of *boaſt*, as the ſurprized city has in the triumphs of its victor.

8. BUT ſecondly either this vaunted piety is not reall, and then 'tis good for nothing, or elſe by being vaunted becomes ſo. If it be not reall, 'tis then the ſuperadding hypocriſy to the former ſacrilege, an attemt at once to rob God and cheat men, and in the event uſually renders them hateful to both; to God (who cannot be mocked) it do's ſo at the inſtant, and ſeldom miſſes to do ſo at laſt to men. An hypocrite has a long part to act, and if his memory fail him but in any one ſcene, his play is ſpoiled: ſo that his hazards are ſo great, that 'tis as little prudent as it is honeſt to ſet up the trade, eſpecially in an age when Piety it ſelf is at ſo low a price, that its counterfeit cannot paſs for much. But if the

piety be indeed true, the *boaſting* it blaſts it, makes it utterly inſignificant. This we are told by *Chriſt* himſelf, who aſſures us, that even the moſt chriſtian actions of Prayer, Alms, and Faſting, muſt expect no other reward (when *boaſted*) than the ſought-for applauſe of men. Matt. 6. When a man ſhall make his own tongue the trumpet of his Alms, or the echo of his Prayers, he craves, or rather ſnatches his own reward, and muſt not look God ſhould heap more upon him: the recompence of his pride he may indeed look for from him, but that of his virtue he has fore-ſtall'd. In ſhort, piety is like thoſe lamps of old, which maintain'd their lights ſome ages under ground, but as ſoon as they took air expired. And ſurely there cannot be a more deplorable folly, than thus to loſe a rich Jewel, only for the pitiful pleaſure of ſhewing it: tis the humor of children and idiots, who muſt be handling their birds till they fly away, and it ranks us with them in point of diſcretion, tho not of innocence.

9. From the view of theſe particulars we may in the groſs conclude that this oſtentation is a moſt fooliſh ſin, ſuch

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as never brought in advantage to any man. There is no vice ſo undermines it ſelf as this do's: 'tis glory it ſeeks, and in ſtead of gaining that, it loſes common ordinary eſtimation. Every body that ſees a bladder puft up, knows 'tis but wind that ſo ſwells it: and there is no ſurer argument of a light frothy brain than this bubling at the mouth. Indeed there is nothing renders any man ſo contemtible, ſo utterly uſeleſs to the world: it excludes him almoſt from all commerce, makes him uncapable of receiving or doing a benefit. No man will do him a good turn, becauſe he foreſees he will arrogate it to himſelf, as the effect of his merit: and none (that are not in ſome great exigence) will receive one from him, as knowing it ſhall be not only proclaimed, but magnified much above the true worth. There ſeems to be but one purpoſe for which he ſerves, and that is to be ſport for his company: and that he ſeldom fails to be, for in theſe gameſome days men will not loſe ſuch an opportunity of divertiſement, and therefore will purpoſely give him hints, which may put him upon his Rhodomontades. I do not ſpeak this by way of encourage-

ment to them, but only to ſhew theſe vaporers, to what ſcorn they expoſe themſelves, and what advantage they give to any that have a mind to abuſe them: for they need not be at any pains for it, they need but ſwim with their ſtream; an approving nod or ſmile ſerves to drive on the deſign, and make them diſplay themſelves more diſadvantagiouſly, more ridiculouſly, than the moſt ſatyrical character could poſſibly do.

10. BUT beſides theſe ſportive projects, ſuch a man laies himſelf open to more dangerous circumventions. He that ſhews himſelf ſo enamour'd of praiſe, that (*Narciſſus* like) he dotes on his own reflection, is a fit prey for flatterers, and ſuch a carcaſe will never want thoſe eagles: when his weak part is once diſcerned (as it muſt be when himſelf publiſhes it) he ſhall quickly be ſurrounded with aſſailants. The laſt Section has ſhewed the miſery of a man ſo beſieged, therefore I ſhall not enlarge on it here, this mention being only intended to evince how apt this vain glorious humor is to betray men to it.

11. THESE are competent ſpecimens of the folly of this vice: but it has yet

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a farther aggravation, that it precludes all means of growing wiſer: 'tis *Solomons* aſſertion, *Seeſt thou a man wiſe in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him*, Prov. 26. 12. And the reaſon is evident, for he diſcards the two grand inſtruments of inſtruction, Admonition and Obſervation. The former he thinks ſuperſeded by his own perfections, and therefore when any ſuch friendly office is attemted towards him, he imputes it either to envy, and a deſire to eclipſe his luſtre by finding ſome ſpot, or elſe to ignorance and incapacity of eſtimating his worth: the one he entertains with indignation, the other with diſdainful pity. As for obſervation, he ſo circumſcribes it within himſelf, that it can never fetch in any thing from without. Reading of men has bin by ſome thought the moſt facile and expedite method for acquiring Knowledge: and ſure for ſome kinds of knowledge it is: but then a man muſt not only read one Author, much leſs the one worſt he can pick out for himſelf. 'Tis an old true ſaying, He that is his own Pupil ſhall have a fool for his Tutor: and truly he that ſtudies only himſelf, will be like to make

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but a ſorry progreſs. Yet this is the caſe of arrogant men, they loſe all the benefit of converſation, and when they ſhould be enriching their minds with forreign treaſure, they are only counting over their own ſtore. Inſtead of adverting to thoſe ſober diſcourſes which they hear from other, perhaps they are watching to interrupt them by ſome pompous ſtory of themſelves, or at leaſt in the abundance of their ſelf-ſufficiency, think they can ſay much better things, magiſterially obtrude their own notions, and fall a teaching when 'tis fitter they ſhould learn: and ſure to be thus forward to lay out, and take no care to bring in, muſt needs end in a Bankrupt-ſtate. 'Tis true, I confeſs, the ſtudy of a mans-ſelf is (rightly taken) the moſt uſeful part of Learning, but then it muſt be ſuch a ſtudy as brings him to know himſelf, which none do ſo little as theſe men; who in this are like thoſe ſilly women the Apoſtle deſcribes, 2 Tim. 3. 7. *Who are ever learning yet never attain.* And 'tis no wonder, for they begin at the wrong end, make no enquiry into their faults or defects, but fix their contemplation only on their more ſplendid qualities,

qualities, with which they are ſo dazled, that when you bring them to the darker parts of themſelves, it fares with them as with thoſe that come newly from gazing on the Sun, they can ſee nothing.

12. AND now having diſſected this ſwelling vice, and ſeen what it is that feeds the tumor, the cure ſuggeſts it ſelf. If the diſeaſe be founded in pride, the abating that is the moſt natural and proper remedy: and truly one would think that mere weighing of the foregoing conſiderations, might prove ſufficient allaies to it. Yet becauſe where humors are turgent, 'tis neceſſary not only to purge them, but alſo to ſtrengthen the infeſted parts, I ſhall adventure to give ſome few advices by way of fortification and antidote.

13. IN the firſt place, that of the Apoſtle offers it ſelf to my hand, *Look not every man on his own things, but every man alſo on the things of others.* Phil. 2. 4. A counſel which in a diſtorted ſenſe ſeems to be too much practiſed. We are apt to apply it to worldly advantages, and in that notion not to look on our own things with thankfulneſs, but on other

other mens with envy. We apply it alſo to errors and ſins, and look not on our own to correct and reform, but on others to deſpiſe and cenſure. Let us at laſt take it in the genuine ſenſe, and not look on our own excellencies, but thoſe of others. We ſee in all things how deſuetude do's contract and narrow our faculties, ſo that we can apprehend only thoſe things wherein we are converſant. The droiling peſant ſcarce thinks there is any world beyond his own Village, or the neighbouring markets; nor any gaity beyond that of a Wake or Morrice; and men who are accuſtom'd only to the admiration of themſelves, think there is nothing beſide them worthy of regard. Theſe unbred minds muſt be a little ſent abroad, made acquainted with thoſe excellencies which God has beſtowed on other men, and then they will not think themſelves like *Gideon*'s fleece to have ſuckt up all the dew of heaven: nay perhaps they may find they rather anſwer the other part of the miracle; and are drier than their neighbours. Let them therefore put themſelves in this courſe, obſerve diligently all the good that is viſible in other men:

and when they find themſelves mounting into their altitudes, let them clog their wings with the remembrance of thoſe who have out-ſoar'd them, not in vain opinion, but in true worth. 'Tis nothing but the fancy of ſingularity that puffs us up. To breath, to walk, to hear, to ſee, are excellent powers, yet no body is proud of them, becauſe they are common to the whole kind: and therefore if we would obſerve the great number of thoſe that equal, or exceed us, even in the more appropriate endowments, we ſhould not put ſo exceſſive a price upon our ſelves.

14. SECONDLY, if we will needs be reflecting upon our ſelves, let us do it more ingenuouſly, more equally, let us take a true ſurvey, and obſerve as well the barren as the fertil part of the ſoil: and if this were done, many mens value would be much ſhort of what they are willing to ſuppoſe it. Did we but compare our crop of weeds and nettles, with that of our corn, we muſt either think our ground is poor, or our ſelves very ill husbands. When therefore the recollection of either real or fancied worth begins to make us aëry, let us condenſe again

by the remembrance of our ſins and folly: 'tis the only poſſible ſervice they can do us, and conſidering how dear they are to coſt us, we had not need loſe this one accidental advantage. In this ſenſe *Satan may caſt out Satan*, our vileſt guilts help to eject our pride; and did we well manage this one ſtratagem againſt him, 'twould give us more cauſe of triumph, than moſt of thoſe things for which we ſo ſpread our plumes: I do not ſay we ſhould contract new guilts to make us humble, God knows we need not, we have all of us enough of the old ſtock, if we would but thus employ them.

15. In the laſt place I ſhould adviſe thoſe who are apt to talk big things of themſelves, to turn into ſome other road of diſcourſe: for if they are their own theme, their tongues will as naturally turn into eulogies, as an horſe do's into that Inn to which he is cuſtomed. All habits do require ſome little exceſs of the contrary to their cure: for we have not ſo juſt a ſcantling of our ſelves, as to know to a grain what will level the ſcales, and place us in the right mediocrity. Let men therefore that have this infirmity, ſhun (as far as prudence and intereſt

intereſt permit) all diſcourſe of themſelves, till they can ſever it from that unhappy appendage. They will not be at all the leſs acceptable company, it being generally thought none of the beſt parts of breeding, to talk much of ones ſelf: for tho it be done ſo as not to argue pride, yet it do's ignorance of more worthy ſubjects.

16. I ſhould here conclude this Section, but that there is another ſort of vaunting Talk, which is not well reducible to any of the former heads, the ſubject matter being vaſtly diſtant: for in thoſe the *Boaſting* was founded in ſome other real or ſuppoſed worth, but in this in baſeneſs and villany. There are a generation of men, who have removed all the Land-marks which their fathers (nay even the Father of ſpirits) have ſet, reverſt the common notions of humanity, and call evil good, and good evil, and thoſe things which a moderate impudence would bluſh to be ſurpriſed in, they not only proclaime but *boaſt* of, blow the trumpet as much before their crimes, as others before their good deeds. Nay ſo much do they affect this inverted ſort of hypocriſy, that they

own more wickedneſs than they act, aſſume to have made practical the higheſt ſpeculations of villany, and like the Devil's *knights errant*, pretend to thoſe *romantic* atchievements, which the verieſt fiend incarnate could never compaſs. Theſe are ſuch prodigies, ſuch monſters of villany, that tho they are the objects of grief and wonder, they are not of counſel. Men who thus rave, we may conclude their brains are turned, and one may as well read Lectures at *Bedlam* as treat with ſuch. Yet we know that there ſharp corrections recover crazed men to ſobriety; and then their cure lies only in the hand of Civil Juſtice: if that would take them at their words, receive their brags as confeſſions, and puniſh them accordingly, it may be a little real ſmart would correct this mad Itch, and teach them not *to glory in their ſhame*. Phil. 3. 19.

17. In the mean time let others who are not yet arrived to this height, conſider betimes, that all indulgent practice of ſin is the direct road to it, and according to the degrees of that indulgence, they make more or leſs haſte. He that conſtantly and habitually indulges,

rides

rides upon the ſpur, and will quickly overtake his leaders. Nay if it be but this one vice of vanity, it may finally bring him to their ſtates. He that loves to brag, will ſcarce find exerciſe enough for that faculty in his virtues, and therefore may at laſt be temted to take in his vices alſo. But that which is more ſeriouſly conſiderable is, that Pride is ſo provoking to Almighty God, that it often cauſes him to withdraw his *Grace*, which is a donative he has promiſed only *to the humble*. Jam. 4. 6. And indeed when we turn that grace into wantonneſs, as the proud man do's who is pamper'd by it into high conceits of himſelf, 'tis not probable God will any longer proſtitute his favors to ſuch abuſe. The Apoſtle obſerves it of the Gentiles, who had in contradiction of their natural light abandon'd themſelves to vile Idolatries, that God *after gave them up to a reprobate mind and vile affections*. Rom. 1. 25, 26. But the Proud now ſtifle a much clearer light, and give up themſelves to as baſe an Idolatry, the adoration of themſelves. And therefore 'tis but equal to expect God ſhould deſert them, and (as ſome nations have deified their diſeaſes) permit

mit them to celebrate even their fouleſt enormities. The application of all I ſhall ſum up in the words of the Apoſtle. Rom. 11. 21. *Take heed leſt he alſo ſpare not thee.*

SECT. X.

Of Querulouſneſs.

1. TO this of Boaſting may not unfitly be ſubjoin'd another inordinancy of the Tongue, *viz.* Murmuring and *Complaining*. For tho theſe faults ſeem to differ as much in their complexions, as Sanguine do's from Melancholy, yet there is nothing more frequent than to ſee them united in the ſame perſon. Nor is this a conjunction of a later date, but is as old as St. *Jude*'s daies, who obſerves that the *murmurers* and *complainers* are the very ſame with thoſe who ſpeak *great ſwelling words*. Jude 16.

2. NOR are we to wonder to find them thus conjoined, if we conſider what an original cognation and kindred they have,

have, they being (however they ſeem divided) ſtreams iſſuing from the ſame fountain. For the very ſame Pride which promts a man to vaunt and overvalue what he is, do's as forcibly incline him to contemn and diſ-value what he has; whilſt meaſuring his enjoiments by that vaſt Idea he has form'd of himſelf, 'tis impoſſible but he muſt think them below him.

3. THIS indeed is the true original of thoſe perpetual *complainings* we hear from all ſorts and conditions of men, For let us paſs thro all degrees, all ages, we ſhall rarely find a ſingle perſon, much leſs any number of men, exempt from this *Querulous*, this ſullen humor: as if that breath of life wherewith God originally inſpired us, had bin given us not to magnify his bounty, but to accuſe his illiberality, and like the diſmaller ſort of inſtruments, could be tuned to no other ſtreins but thoſe of mourning and lamentation. Every man contributes his note to this doleful harmony, and after all that God has done to oblige and delight mankind, ſcarce any man is ſatisfied enough, I will not ſay to be thankful, but to be patient. For alas!

what

what Tragical *complaints* do men make of their infelicity, when perhaps their proſperity is as much the envious outcry of others? Every little defeat of a deſign, of an appetite, every little diſ-regard from thoſe above them, or leſs ſolemn obſervance from thoſe below them, makes their *heart hot within them*, Pſal. 39. 3. and the tongue (that combuſtible part) quickly takes fire and *breaks out* into extravagant exclamations. It is indeed ſtrange to ſee how weighty every the trivialleſt thing is when a paſſion is caſt into the ſcale with it, how every the ſlighteſt inconvenience or petty want preponderates hundreds of great ſubſtantial bleſſings: when indeed were it in an inſtance never ſo conſiderable, it could be no juſt counter-poiſe. Yet ſo cloſely is this corruption interwoven with our conſtitution, that it has ſometimes prevail'd even upon good men. *Jacob* tho he had twelve ſons, yet upon the ſuppoſed death of one deſpiſed the comforts of all the reſt, and with an obſtinate ſorrow reſolves to *go mourning to his grave*, Gen. 37. 35. *David* after that ſignal victory which had preſerv'd his life, reinſtated him in his Throne, and re-

ſtor'd him to the Ark and Sanctuary, yet ſuffer'd the loſs of his rebellious ſon, who was the author of his danger, to overwhelm the ſenſe of his deliverance, and inſtead of hymns and praiſes, breaks out into ejulations and effeminate wailings, 2 Sam. 18. 33.

4. BUT God knows the moſt of our *complaints* cannot pretend to ſuch conſiderable motives: they are not the bowels of a father, the impreſſes of nature that excite our repinings, but the impulſes of our luſts and inordinate appetites. Our diſcontents are uſually ſuch as *Ahab*'s for his neighbours vineyard, *Haman*'s for *Mordecai*'s obeiſance, *Achitophel*'s for having his counſel rejected. Every diſappointment of our avarice, ambition, and pride, fills our heart with bitterneſs, and our mouths with clamors. For if we ſhould examine the numerous *complaints* which ſound in every corner, it would doubtleſs be found that the greateſt part of them have ſome ſuch original: and that, whether the pretended grievances be public or private. For the firſt: many a man is a ſtate-malecontent, meerly becauſe he ſees another advanced to that honor or wealth which

he thinks he has better deſerv'd. He is alwaies inveighing againſt ſuch unequal diſtributions, where the beſt ſervices (ſuch you may be ſure his own are) are the worſt rewarded: nor do's he ever ceaſe to predict public ruines, till his private are repaired. But as ſoon as that is done, his augury grows more mild: and as if the ſtate and he were like *Hippocrates*'s twins, his recruites give new vigor to that, and till his next ſuit is denied, every thing is well adminiſtred. So full alas! men are of themſelves, that 'tis hard to find any the moſt ſplendid pretences which have not ſomething of that at the bottom: and would every man ranſack his own heart, and reſolve not to caſt a ſtone till he had firſt clear'd it of all ſiniſter reſpects, perhaps the numbers of our *complainers* would be much abated.

5. NOR is it otherwiſe in private diſcontents. Men are apt to think themſelves ill uſed by any man who will not ſerve their intereſt or their humor, nay ſometimes their vices; and are prone in all companies to arraign ſuch an unpliant perſon, as if he were an enemy to mankind, becauſe he is not a ſlave to their will. How many have quarrel'd even

even with their deareſt friends, becauſe they would not aſſiſt them to their own ruine, or have ſtriven to divert them from it: ſo forcible are our propenſions to mutiny, that we equally take occaſions from benefits or injuries.

6. BUT the higheſt and moſt unhappy inſtance of all is in our behaviour towards God, whoſe allotments we diſpute with the ſame or rather greater boldneſs than we do thoſe of men. What elſe mean thoſe impatient *murmurs* at thoſe things which are the immediate iſſues of his providence? Such are our native blemiſhes, diſeaſes, death of friends, and the like. Nay what indeed are our diſpleaſures even at thoſe things which we pretend to faſten upon ſecond Cauſes? For thoſe being all under the ſubordination of the firſt, cannot move but by its permiſſion. This holy *Job* well diſcern'd, and therefore do's not indite the *Chaldeans* or *Sabeans* for his plunder, but knowing they were but inſtruments, he ſubmiſsly acknowledges, that there was an higher agent in his loſs, *The Lord hath taken away*, Job 1. 21. When therefore we ravingly execrate the rapine of one man, the deceit of another for our impoveriſh-

ment, when we angrily charge our defamation on the malice of our maligners, our diſappointments on the treachery or negligence of our friends, we do interpretatively conclude either that there is no over-ruling providence which could have reſtrained thoſe events, or elſe (which is equally horrid) we accuſe it as not having done well in permitting them. So that againſt whomſoever we direct our clamors, their laſt rebound is againſt heaven; this *Querulous* humor carrying alwaies an implicite repugnance to Gods diſpoſals, but where it is indulged to, it uſually is its own expoſitor, and explicitely avows it, charges God fooliſhly, and by impious murmurs blaſphemes that power which it cannot reſiſt. Indeed the progreſs is very natural for our impatiences at men to ſwell into mutinies againſt God: for when the mind is once imbitter'd, it diſtinguiſhes not of objects, but indifferently lets fly its venim. *He that frets himſelf*, the Prophet tells us, *will curſe his King*, nay *his God*, Iſa. 8. 21. and he that quarrels at Gods diſtributions, is in the direct road to defie his Being.

7. By this we may eſtimate the danger

ger of our diſcontents, which tho at firſt they are introduced by the inordinate love of our ſelves, yet are very apt to terminate in hatred and blaſphemies againſt God. He therefore that would ſecure himſelf from the higheſt degree, muſt watch againſt the loweſt; as he that would prevent a total inundation, muſt avert the ſmalleſt breach in his banks. Not but that even the firſt beginnings are in themſelves well worth our guarding: for abſtracting from all the danger of this enormous increaſe, theſe murmurings (like a mortiferous herb) are poiſonous even in their firſt ſpring, before they arrive to their full maturity. To be alwaies moralizing the fable of *Prometheus* upon ones ſelf, playing the Vultur upon ones own entrails, is no deſirable thing, tho we were accountable to none but our ſelves for it: to dip our tongues in gall, to have nothing in our mouth, but the extract, and exhalation of our inward bitterneſs, is ſure no great ſenſuality. So that did we conſult only our own eaſe, we might from that ſingle Topic draw arguments enough againſt our mutinies.

8. BUT

8. But beſides our duty and eaſe, our credit and reputation make their plea alſo. Fortitude is one of the nobleſt of moral virtues, and has the luck to appear conſiderable even to thoſe who deſpiſe all the reſt. Now one of the moſt proper and eminent acts of that is, the bearing adverſe events with an evenneſs of temper. This paſſive valour is as much the mark of a great mind as the active, nay perhaps more, the latter being often owing to the Animal, this to the rational part of man. And ſure we muſt ſtrangely have corrupted the principles of *Morality* as well as *Religion*, if every turbulent unruly ſpirit, that fills the world with blood and rapine, ſhall have his ferity call'd gallantry; yet that ſober courage, that maintains it ſelf againſt all the ſhocks of fortune, that keeps its poſt in ſpight of the rudeſt encounters, ſhall not be allowed at leaſt as good a name. And then on the contrary we may conclude, that to ſink under every croſs accident, to be ſtill whining and complaining, crying out upon every touch, is a note of a mean degenerous ſoul, below the dignity of our reaſonable nature. For certainly God never gave

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us reaſon for ſo unkind a purpoſe, as only to quicken and enhance the reſentment of our ſufferings, but rather to controll thoſe diſorders, which the more tumultuous part of us, our ſenſes, are apt to raiſe in us: and we are ſo far men and no farther, as we uſe it to that end. Therefore if the dictates of religion cannot reſtrain our murmurs, if we are not Chriſtians enough to ſubmit to the divine precepts of meekneſs and acquieſcence: yet let us at leaſt keep within thoſe bounds which ingenuous nature has ſet us, and not by our unmanly impatiencies enter common with brutes and animals.

9. NAY I may farther add, if neither for Gods nor our own ſakes, yet for others, for humane ſocieties ſake, this *querulous* inclination ſhould be ſuppreſt; there being nothing that renders a man more unpleaſant, more uneaſy company. For (beſides that 'tis very apt to vent it ſelf upon thoſe with whom he converſes, rendring him capricious and exceptious; and 'tis an harſh, a grating ſound to hear a man alwaies in the *complaining* key) no man would willingly dwell within the noiſe of ſhreeks and

and groans; and the exclamations of the diſcontented differ from thoſe only by being more articulate. It is a very unwelcome importunity, to entertain a mans company with remonſtrances of his own infelicities and miſadventures, and he that will relate all his grievances to others, will quickly make himſelf one to them. For tho he that is full of the inward ſenſe of them, thinks it rather an eaſe than oppreſſion to ſpeak them out, yet the caſe is far otherwiſe with his auditors: they are perhaps as much taken up with themſelves as he is, and as little at leiſure to conſider his concerns, as he theirs. Alas! we are not now in thoſe primitive daies, when there was as it were one common ſenſe among Chriſtians, when *if one member ſuffer'd, all the members ſuffer'd with it.* 1 Cor. 12. 26. That Charity which gave that ſympathetic motion to the whole, is now it ſelf benum'd, flows rarely beyond the narrow compaſs of our perſonal intereſt; and therefore we cannot expect that men ſhould be very patient of our complaints who are not concern'd in the cauſes of them. The Prieſts anſwer to *Judas* do's ſpeak the ſenſe of moſt men

in the caſe *What is that to us? See thou to to that.* Mat. 27. 4. I do not deny but that the diſcharging ones griefs into the boſom of a true friend, is both innocent and prudent: nay indeed he that has ſuch a treaſure, is unkind to himſelf if he uſe it not. But that which I would diſſwade, is the promiſcuous uſe of this liberty in common converſation, the ſatisfying our ſpleen, when we cannot eaſe our hearts by it, the loud declaimings at our miſery, which is ſeldom ſever'd from as ſevere reflections on thoſe whom we ſuppoſe the cauſes of it; by which nothing can be acquired but the opinion of our impatience, or perhaps ſome new grievance from ſome, who think themſelves concern'd to vindicate thoſe whom we aſperſe. In a word it is as indecent as it is unacceptable, and we may obſerve all men are willing to ſlink out of ſuch company, the Sober for the hazards, and Jovial for the unpleaſantneſs. So that the murmurer ſeems to be turn'd off to the company of thoſe doleful creatures which the Prophet mentions, which were *to inhabite the ruines of Babylon*, Iſa. 13. 21. For he is ill converſation to all men, tho the worſt of all to himſelf.

10. And now upon the force of all theſe conſiderations, I may reaſonably impreſs the Wiſe mans counſel, *Therefore beware of murmuring*, Wiſd. 1. 11. And indeed it is not the precept of the Wiſe man alone, but of all who have made any juſt pretence to that title. For when we conſider thoſe excellent lectures of Contentation and Acquieſcence, wherewith the writings of Philoſophers abound, 'tis hard to ſay whether they ſpeak more of inſtruction or reproach to us. When their confuſed notions of a Deity had given them ſuch impreſſions of his Wiſdom and Goodneſs, that they would not pretend to make any elections for themſelves: how do's it ſhame our more explicite knowledge, who dare not depend on him in the ſmalleſt inſtance; who will not take his diſpoſals for good, unleſs our ſenſes become his ſureties; which amounts but to that degree of credit, which the moſt faithleſs man may expect from us, the truſting him as far as we ſee him? This is ſuch a contumely to him, as the Ethnic world durſt not offer him, and is the peculiar inſolence of us degenerated Chriſtians, who ſure cannot be thought in earneſt when we talk of

ſinging *Hallelujahs* in the next world to him, whilſt we entertain him here only with the ſullen noiſe of *murmurs* and *repinings*. For we are not to think that Heaven will metamorphoſe us on a ſudden, and turn our exclamations and wild clamors into *Laud*'s and *Magnificat*'s. It do's indeed perfect and crown thoſe graces which were here inchoate and begun, but no mans converſion ever ſucceeded his being there: for Chriſt has expreſly told us, *That except we be converted, we ſhall not enter iuto the kingdom of heaven*; if we go hence in our froward diſcontents, they will aſſociate us with thoſe, with whom is *weeping, and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth.*

Sect. XI.

Of Poſitiveneſs.

1. ANOTHER very unhandſom circumſtance in diſcourſe is the being over confident and peremtory, a thing which do's very much unfit men for converſation, it being lookt on as the common birth-right of mankind, that every man is to opine according to the dictates of his own underſtanding, not anothers. Now this peremtorineſs is of two ſorts, the one a Magiſterialneſs in matters of opinion and ſpeculation, the other a Poſitiveneſs in relating matters of fact: in the one we impoſe upon mens underſtandings, in the other on their faith.

2. For the firſt, he muſt be much a ſtranger in the world who has not met with it: there being a generation of men, who as the Prophet ſpeaks, *Are wiſe in their own eies, and prudent in their own ſight.* Iſa. 5. 21. Nay not only ſo, but who make

make themſelves the ſtandards of wiſdom, to which all are bound to conform, and whoever weighs not in their balance, be his reaſons never ſo weighty, they write *Tekel* upon them. This is one of the moſt oppreſſive Monopolies imaginable: all others can concern only ſomething without us, but this faſtens upon our nature, yea and the better part of it too, our reaſon; and if it meet with thoſe who have any conſiderable ſhare of that within them, they will often be temted to rally it, and not too tamely reſign this native liberty. Reaſon ſubmits only to reaſon, and he that aſſaults it with bare authority (that which is Divine alwaies excepted) may as well cut flame with his ſword, or harden wax in the ſun.

3. 'TIS true indeed theſe great Dictators do ſometimes run down the company, and carry their Hypotheſis without conteſt: but of this there may be divers reaſons beſides the weight of their arguments. Some unſpeculative men may not have the skill to examine their aſſertions, and therefore an aſſent is their ſafeſt courſe; others may be lazy and not think it worth their pains; a third ſort may be modeſt and awed by a ſevere brow

brow and an imperious nod: and perhaps the wiſer may providently foreſee the impoſſibility of convincing one who thinks himſelf not ſubject to error. Upon theſe or other like grounds 'tis very poſſible all may be ſilenced when never a one is convinced: ſo that theſe great Maſters may often make very falſe eſtimates of their conqueſts, and *ſacrifice to their own nets*, Habak. 1. 16. when they have taken nothing.

4. NAY indeed this inſolent way of propoſing is ſo far from propagating their notions, that it gives prejudice againſt them. They are the gentle inſinuations which pierce, (as oyl is the moſt penetrating of all liquors;) but in theſe magiſterial documents men think themſelves attackt, and ſtand upon their guard, and reckon they muſt part with honor together with their opinion, if they ſuffer themſelves to be hector'd out of it. Beſides, this impoſing humor is ſo unamiable, that it gives an averſion to the perſon; and we know how forcible perſonal prejudices are (tho 'tis true they ſhould not be) towards the biaſſing of opinions. Nay indeed men of this temper do cut themſelves off

off from the opportunities of Proſelyting others, by averting them from their company. Freedom is the endearing thing in ſociety, and where that is controll'd, men are not very fond of aſſociating themſelves. 'Tis natural to us to be uneaſy in the preſence of thoſe who aſſume an authority over us. Children care not for the company of their Parents or Tutors, and men will care leſs for theirs, who would make them children by uſurping a Tutorage.

5. ALL theſe inconveniencies are evidently conſequent to this dogmatizing, ſuppoſing men be never ſo much in the right: but if they happen to be in the wrong, what a ridiculous pageantry is it, to ſee ſuch a Philoſophical gravity ſet to *man* out a ſoleciſm? A concluding face put upon no concluding argument, is the moſt contemtible ſort of folly in the world. They do by this ſound a trumpet to their own defeat: and whereas a modeſt miſtake might ſlip by undiſcern'd, theſe rhodomontade-errors force themſelves upon mens obſervation, and make it as impoſſible for men not to ſee, as it is not to deſpiſe them when they do. For indeed pride is as

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ill linkt with error, as we uſually ſay it is with beggery, and in this as well as that, converts pity into contemt.

6. AND then it would be conſidered, what ſecurity any man that will be impoſing has, that this will not be his caſe. Human nature is very fallible, and as it is poſſible a man may err in a great many things, ſo 'tis certain every man do's in ſomething or other. Now who knows at the inſtant he is ſo poſitive, but this may be his erring turn? Alas! how frequently are we miſtaken even in common ordinary things; for as the Wiſe man ſpeaks, *how hardly do we judge aright even in things that are before us*, Wiſd. 9. 16. our very ſenſes do ſometimes delude us. How then may we wander in things of abſtruſe ſpeculation? The conſideration of this hath with ſome ſo prevail'd, that it has produc'd a Sect of Scepticiſm: and tho I preſs it not for that purpoſe, yet ſure it may reaſonably be urged to introduce ſome modeſty and calmneſs in our aſſertions. For when we have no other certainty of our being in the right, but our own perſwaſions that we are ſo: this may often be but making one error the gage for

another. For God knows confidence is ſo far from a certain mark of truth, that 'tis often the ſeducer into falſhood; none being ſo apt to loſe their way as thoſe who, out of an ungrounded preſumtion of knowing it, deſpiſe all direction from others.

7. LET all this be weighed, and the reſult will be, that this peremtorineſs is a thing that can befit no form of underſtanding. It renders wiſe men diſobliging and troubleſom, and fools ridiculous and contemtible. It caſts a prejudice upon the moſt ſolid reaſoning, and it renders the lighter more notoriouſly deſpicable. 'Tis pity good parts ſhould be leaven'd by it, made a ſnare to the owners, and uſeleſs to others. And 'tis pity too that weak parts ſhould by it be condemn'd to be alwaies ſo, by deſpiſing thoſe aids which ſhould improve them. Since therefore it is ſo ill calculated for every Meridian, would God all climes might be purged from it.

8. AND as there are weighty objections againſt it in reſpect of its effects, ſo there are no inconſiderable prejudices in relation to its cauſes, of which we may reckon Pride to be the moſt certain and

univerſal: for what ever elſe caſually occurs to it, this is the fundamental conſtitutive principle; nothing but a great overweening of a mans own underſtanding, being able to inſtate him in that imaginary empire over other mens. For here ſure we may ask the Apoſtles queſtion, *who made thee to differ from another?* When God has made Rationality the common portion of mankind, how came it to be thy incloſure? or what ſignature has he ſet upon thine, what mark of excellency, that thine ſhould be paramount? Doubtleſs if thou fancieſt thou haſt that part of *Jacob*'s bleſſing, *To be Lord of thy brethren, and that all thy mothers ſons ſhould bowe down to thee*, Gen. 27. 29. thou haſt got it more ſurreptitiouſly than he did, and with leſs effect: for tho *Iſaac* could not retract his miſtaken benediction, God will never ratify that fantaſtic, thou haſt pronounced to thy ſelf, with his real effective one.

9. BUT there happens many times to be another ingredient beſides Pride, and that is Ignorance: for theſe qualities however they may ſeem at war, do often very cloſely combine. He who has nar-

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row notions, that knows but a few things, and has no glimpſe of any beyond him, thinks there are no ſuch: and therefore as if he had (like *Alexander*) no want but that of worlds to conquer, he thinks himſelf the abſolute monarch of all knowledge. And this is of all others the moſt unhappy compoſition: for Ignorance being of its ſelf like ſtiff clay, an infertil ſoile, when Pride comes to ſcorch and harden it, it grows perfectly impenetrable: and accordingly we ſee none are ſo inconvincible as your half-witted people, who know juſt enough to excite their Pride, but not ſo much as to cure their ignorance.

10. THERE remains yet a ſecond kind of Peremtorineſs which I am to ſpeak to, and that is of thoſe who can make no relation without an atteſtation of its certainty: a ſort of hoſpitable people, who entertain all the idle vagrant reports, and ſend them out with paſſ-ports and teſtimonials, who when they have once adopted a ſtory, would have it paſs for legitimate how ſpurious ſoever it originally was. Theſe ſomewhat reſemble thoſe Hoſpitals in *Italy*, where all baſtards are ſure of reception, and ſuch a proviſion

as may enable them to ſubſiſt in the world: and were it not for ſuch men, many a fatherleſs lie would be ſtifled in its birth. It is indeed ſtrange to ſee, how ſuddenly looſe rumors knit into formal ſtories, and from thence grow to certainties; but 'tis ſtranger to ſee that men can be of ſuch profligate impudence, as knowingly to give them that advance. And yet 'tis no rarity to meet with ſuch men who will pawn their honour, their ſouls, for that unworthy purpoſe: nay and that too with as much impertinence as baſeneſs, when no intereſt of their own, or perhaps any mans elſe is to be ſerved by it.

10. This is ſo prodigious a thing, as ſeems to excite ones curioſity to inquire the cauſe of ſo wonderful an effect. And here, as in other unnatural productions, there are ſeveral concurrents. If we trace it from its original, its firſt element ſeems to be Idleneſs: this diverting a man from ſerious uſeful entertainments, forces him upon (the uſual refuge of vacant perſons) the inquiring after News; which when he has got, the venting of it is the next buſineſs. If he be of a credulous nature, and believe it

it himſelf, he do's the more innocently impoſe it on others: yet then to ſecure himſelf from the imputation of Levity and too eaſie Faith, he is often temted to lend ſome probable circumſtance. Nay if he be of a proud humor, and have that miſerable vanity of loving to ſpeak big, and to be thought a man of greater correſpondence and intelligence than his neighbours, he will not bate an ace of abſolute certainty; but however doubtful or improbable the thing is, coming from him it muſt go for an indiſputable truth. This ſeems to be the deſcent of this unhappy folly, which yet is often nurſt up by a mean or imprudent Education. A man that hath converſt only with that lower ſort of company, who durſt not diſpute his veracity, thinks the ſame falſe coin will paſs over the world, which went currant among his fathers ſervants or tenants: and therefore we may obſerve that this is moſt uſual in young men, who have come raw into company with good fortunes and ill breeding. But it is too true alſo that too many never loſe the habit, but are as moroſely *poſitive* in their age, as they were childiſhly ſo in their youth. Indeed

deed 'ts impoſſible they ſhould be otherwiſe, unleſs they have the wit to diſentangle themſelves firſt from the love of flattery, and after from the company of flatterers: for (as I have before obſerv'd) no vice will ever wither under their ſhade. I think I ſhall do the Reader no ill office to let in a little light upon them, and ſhew him ſome of thoſe many miſchiefs that attend this unworthy practice.

12. FIRST, it engages a man to Oaths, and for ought he knows to Perjuries. When he has lancht out boldly into an incredible relation, he thinks he has put his Credit upon the forlorn hope, and muſt take care to relieve it: and there is no ſuccor ſo conſtantly ready at hand as that of oaths and imprecations, and therefore whole vollies of them are diſcharged upon the doubtful. Thus do we make God a witneſs, and our ſouls parties in the cauſe of every trifling rumor, as if we had model'd our Divinity by the ſcheme of that Jeſuitical Caſuiſt, who legitimates *the killing of a man for an apple*.

13. A ſecond miſchief is, that it betraies men to quarrels. He that is peremtory

tory in his own ſtory, may meet with another that is as peremtory in the contradiction of it, and then the two Sr. *Poſitives* muſt have a skirmiſh indeed. He that has atteſted the truth of a falſe, or the certainty of a doubtful thing, has brought himſelf into the ſame ſtrait with *Balaam*'s Aſs, he muſt either fall down flat, or run upon a ſword, Num. 22. 27. For if his hearers do but expreſs a diffidence, either he muſt ſink to a downright confeſſion that he was a liar: or elſe he muſt huff and bluſter till perhaps he raiſe a counter-ſtorm, and as he fool'd himſelf out of his truth, ſo be beaten out of his pretence to it. Indeed there is ſcarce any quality that do's ſo temt and invite affronts as this do's: for he that can deſcend to ſuch a meanneſs, may reaſonably enough be preſumed to have little (as of true worth, ſo) even of that which the world calls Gallantry, and ſo every puny ſword-man will think him a good tame quarry to enter and fleſh himſelf upon.

14. IN the third place it expoſes him to all the contemt and ſcorn which either good or ill men can fling upon him: the good abominate the ſin, the ill triumph

umph over the folly of it. The truth is there can be nothing more wretchedly mean. To be *Knight* of the *Poſt* to every fabulous relation, is ſuch a ſordid thing, that there can ſcarce be any name of reproach too vile for it. And certainly he that can pawn his faith upon ſuch miſerable terms, will by thoſe frequent mortgages quickly be ſnapt upon a forfeiture; or however will have his credit ſo impair'd by it, that no man will think his word a competent gage for the ſlighteſt concern.

15. And this may paſs for a fourth conſideration, That this *Poſitiveneſs* is ſo far from gaining credit to his preſent affirmation, that it deſtroies it for the future: for he that ſees a man make no difference in the confidence of his aſſerting realities and fictions, can never take his meaſures by any thing he avers, but according to the common Proverb, will be in danger of disbelieving him even when he ſpeaks truth. And of this no man can want conviction, who will but conſult his own obſervation. For what an allay do we find it to the credit of the moſt probable event, that it is reported by one who uſes to ſtretch? Thus un-

unhappily do ſuch men defeat their own deſigns: for while they aver ſtoutly that they may be believed, that very thing makes them doubted, the world being not now to learn how frequently confidence is made a ſupplement for truth. Nor let any man who uſes this, flatter himſelf that he alone do's (like *Job*'s meſſenger) eſcape the common fate: for tho perhaps he meet with ſome who in civility or pity will not diſpute the probability of his narrations, or with others who for rallery will not diſcourage the humor, with which they mean (in his abſence) to divert themſelves, yet he may reſt aſſur'd he is diſcern'd by all, and derided for it.

16. IT therefore concerns men who either regard their truth, or their reputation, not to indulge to this humor, which is the moſt ſilly way of ſhipwracking both. For he that will lay thoſe to ſtake upon every flying ſtory, may as well wager his eſtate which way the wind will ſit next morning, there being nothing leſs to be confided in, than the breath of fame, or the whiſpers of private talebearers. Wiſe men are afraid to report improbable truths: what a fool-hardi-

neſs is it then to atteſt improbable falſities, as it often is the luck of theſe *Poſitive* men to do.

17. CERTAINLY there is nothing which they deſign by this, which may not be obtain'd more effectually by a modeſt and unconcern'd relation. He that barely relates what he has heard, and leaves the hearer to judge of the probability, do's as much (I am ſure more civilly) entertain the company, as he that throws down his gauntlet in atteſtation. He as much ſatisfies the itch of telling news; he as much perſwades his hearers: nay very much more (for theſe over earneſt aſſeverations ſerve but to give men ſuſpicion that the ſpeaker is conſcious of his own falſeneſs:) and all this while he has his retreat ſecure, and ſtands not reſponſible for the truths of his relation. Nay indeed tho men ſpeak never ſo known and certain truths, 'tis moſt adviſeable not to preſs them too importunately. For boldneſs, like the *Bravoes* and *Banditi*, is ſeldom imploied but upon deſperate ſervices, and is ſo known a Pander for lying, that truth is but defam'd by its attendance.

18. To conclude, modeſty is ſo amiable

ble, ſo inſinuating a thing, that all the rules of Oratory cannot help men to a more agreeble ornament of diſcourſe. And if they will try it in both the foregoing inſtances, they will undoubtedly find the effects of it: a modeſt propoſal will ſooneſt captivate mens reaſons, and a modeſt relation their belief.

Sect. XII.

Of Obſcene Talk.

1. THERE is another vice of the Tongue which I cannot but mention, tho I knew not in which of the former Claſſes to place it: not that it comes under none, but that 'tis ſo common to all, that 'tis not eaſy to reſolve to which peculiarly to aſſign it, I mean *Obſcene and Immodeſt Talk*, which is offenſive to the purity of God, dammageable and infectious to the innocence of our neighbours, and moſt pernicious to our ſelves: and yet is now grown a thing ſo common, that one would think we were fallen into an age of *Metamorphoſis*, and that the Brutes did not only poetically and in fiction, but really ſpeak. For the talk of many is ſo beſtial, that it ſeems to be but the conceptions of the more libidinous animals clothed in humane language.

2. And yet even this muſt paſs for ingenuity, and this vile deſcent below hu-

humanity, muſt be counted among the higheſt ſtreins of Wit. A wretched debaſement of that ſprightful faculty, thus to be made the interpreter to a Goat or Boar: for doubtleſs had thoſe creatures but the organs of ſpeech, their fancies lie enough that way to make them as good company, as thoſe who more ſtudiouſly apply themſelves to this ſort of entertainment.

3. THE crime is comprehenſive enough to afford abundance of matter for the moſt ſatyrical zeal: but I conſider the diſſecting of putrid bodies may caſt ſuch peſtilential fumes, that all the benefits of the ſcrutiny will not recompence. I ſhall therefore in reſpect to the Reader diſmiſs this noiſom ſubject, and thereby give an example with what abhorrence he ſhould alwaies reject ſuch kind of diſcourſe, remembring the advice of St. Paul, *That all uncleanneſs ſhould not be once named among thoſe who would walk as becometh ſaints.* Eph. 5. 3.

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The Cloſe.

1. I HAVE now touched upon thoſe enormities of Speech which I principally deſign'd to obſerve, wherein I have bin far from making a full and exact catalogue: therefore I would have no man take this little Tract for a juſt Criterion, by which to try himſelf in reference to his words. Yet God grant that all that read it, may be able to approve themſelves even by this imperfect eſſay: and he that do's ſo, makes fair approaches towards being *that perfect man* St. *James* ſpeaks of, chap. 3. 2. Theſe being ſuch faults of the Tongue as are the harder to avoid, becauſe they are every day exemplified to us in common practice, (nay ſome of them recommended as reputable and ingenious.) And it is a ſtrange inſinuative power which example and cuſtom have upon us. We ſee it in every trivial ſecular inſtance, in our very habit: thoſe dreſſes which we laught at in our forefathers wardrobes or pictures, when by the circulation of time and vanity they are brought about, we think very becoming. 'Tis the ſame in our

our diet: our very palates conform to the faſhion, and every thing grows amiable to our fancies, according as 'tis more or leſs received in the world. And upon this account all ſobriety and ſtrict virtue lies now under a heavy prejudice, and no part of it more, than this of the Tongue, which cuſtom has now enfranchized from all the bonds Moraliſts or Divines had laid upon it.

2. But the greater the difficulties are, the more it ought to awake our diligence: if we lie looſe and careleſly, 'tis odds we ſhall be carried away with the ſtream. We had need therefore fix our ſelves, and by a ſober recollection of the ends for which our Speech was given us, and the account we muſt one day give of it, impreſs upon our ſelves the baſeneſs and the danger of miſemploying it. Yet a negative innocence will not ſerve our turns, 'twill but put us in the condition of him, *who wrapt up the talent he was commanded to employ*, Mat. 25. 25. Nay indeed 'twill be impoſſible to preſerve even that if we aſpire no farther. The Tongue is a buſie active part, will ſcarce be kept from motion, and therefore if that activity be not determin'd to good objects

objects, 'twill be practiſing upon bad. And indeed I believe a great part of its licentiouſneſs is owing to this very thing. There are ſo few good themes of diſcourſe in uſe, that many are driven to the ill for want of better. Learning is thought Pedantic, Agriculture Peaſant-like, and Religion the moſt inſufferable of all: ſo by excluding of all uſeful ſubjects of converſe, we come together as St. *Paul* (in another caſe) ſaies, *Not for the better but for the worſe*, 1 Cor. 11. 17. And if the Philoſopher thought he had loſt that day wherein he had not learnt ſomething worthy his notice, how many daies do we worſe than loſe, by having them not only emty of ſolid uſeful acquiſitions, but full of noxious and pernicious ones? And indeed if they be the one, they will not miſs to be the other alſo: for the mind is like the ſtomach, which if it be not ſupplied with wholeſom nouriſhment, will at laſt ſuck in thoſe humors with which the body moſt abounds. So that if in our converſe we do not interchange ſober uſeful notions, we ſhall at the beſt but traffique toies and baubles, and moſt commonly infection and poiſon. He therefore that would keep his

tongue from betraying himſelf or others to ſin, muſt tune it to a quite contrary key, make it an inſtrument, and incentive to virtue, by which he ſhall not only ſecure the negative part of his duty, but comply with the poſitive alſo, in employing it to thoſe uſes for which it was given him.

3. IT would be too vaſt an undertaking to preſcribe the particular ſubjects of ſuch diſcourſe, nay indeed impoſſible, becauſe many of them are occaſional, ſuch as cannot aforehand be reduced to any certain account. This only in the general we may reſt upon, that all Speech tending to the glory of God or the good of man, is aright directed. Which is not to be underſtood ſo reſtrictively, as if nothing but Divinity or the neceſſary concerns of humane life, may lawfully be brought into diſcourſe: ſomething is to be indulged to common civility, more to the intimacies and endearments of friendſhip, and a competency to thoſe recreative diſcourſes which maintain the chearfulneſs of ſociety; all which are, if moderately uſed, within the latitude of the rule, as tending (tho in a lower degree) to the well-being of men, and by

conſequent to the honor of God, who indulges us thoſe innocent refreſhments. But if the ſubordinate uſes come to encroach upon the higher, if we dwell here and look no farther, they then become very ſinful by the exceſs, which were not ſo in their nature. That inordinacy ſets them in oppoſition to Gods deſignation, in which they were allowed only a ſecondary place. We ſhould therefore be carefull to improve all opportunities of letting our tongues pay their more immediate homage to God, in the duties of prayers and praiſes, making them not only the interpreters of our pious affections, but the promoters of the like in others. And indeed he can ſcarce be thought in earneſt, who prays, *Hallowed be thy Name*, and do's not as much endeavour it with men, as he ſolicites it from God.

4. And if we anſwer our obligations in this point, we ſhall in it diſcharge the higheſt part of our duty to man alſo: for in whoſe heart ſoever we can implant a true reverential aw of God, we ſow the ſeed of immortality, of an endleſs happy being, the greateſt the moſt ſuperlative good whereof he is capable. Beſides in the interim

interim we do by it help to manumit and releaſe him from thoſe ſervile drudgeries to vice, under which thoſe remain who live without God in the world. And theſe indeed are benefits worthy the dignity of humane nature to communicate. And it is both ſad and ſtrange to ſee among the multitude and variety of Leagues that are contracted in the world, how few there are of theſe pious combinations; how thoſe who ſhew themſelves concern'd in all the petty ſecular intereſts of their friends, never take this at all into their care; a pregnant evidence how little true friendſhip there is among men.

5. I know ſome think they ſufficiently excuſe themſelves when they ſhift off this office to Divines, whoſe peculiar buſineſs they ſay it is. But this is as if one who ſees a poor fainting wretch, ſhould forbear to adminiſter a cordial he has at hand, for fear of intrenching on the Phyſitians faculty. Many opportunities a friend or companion may have which a Divine may want. He often ſees a man in the very fit, and ſo may more aptly apply: for where there is an intimacy of converſe, men lay themſelves open, diſcover thoſe paſſions, thoſe

vices, which they carefully veil when a ſtrange or ſeverer eie approches. Beſides, as ſuch an one may eaſielier diſcern the diſeaſe, ſo he has better advantages for adminiſtring remedies: ſo children will not take thoſe medicines from the Doctors hand, which they will from a nurſe or mother: and we are uſually too childiſh in what relates to our ſouls; look on good counſel from an Eccleſiaſtic as a Divinity-potion, and ſet our ſtomachs againſt it; but a familiar may inſenſibly inſinuate it into us, and ere we are aware beguile us into health. Yet if Lay perſons will needs give the Clergy the incloſure of this office, they ſhould at leaſt withdraw thoſe impediments they have laid in their way, by depoſiting thoſe prejudices which will certainly fruſtrate their endeavour. Men have in theſe latter daies bin taught to look on Preaching as a thing of form to the Hearers, and of profit only to the Speakers, a *craft whereby*, as *Demetrius* ſaies, *they get their living*. Acts 19. 25. But admit it were ſo in this laſt reſpect, yet it do's not infer it ſhould be ſo in the former. If it be a trade, 'twas ſure thought (as in all ages but this) a very uſeful one, or elſe there

there would never have bin ſuch encouragement given to it. No ſtate ever allotted public certain ſallaries for a ſet of men that were thought utterly uſeleſs: and if there be uſe to be made of them, ſhall we loſe our advantages merely becauſe they gain theirs? We are in nothing elſe ſo ſenſeleſs, no man will refuſe counſel from a Phyſician, becauſe he lives by the profeſſion. 'Tis rather an argument on his ſide, that becauſe ſuch an intereſt of his own depends on it, he has bin the more induſtrious to fit himſelf for it. But not to run farther in this digreſſion, I ſhall apply it to my purpoſe, by making this equitable propoſal, that Lay men will not ſo moralize the common fable, as neither to admoniſh one another themſelves, nor ſuffer Miniſters to do it without them. And truly 'tis hard if neither of theſe can be granted, when both ought. I am ſure all is little enough that can be done, tho we ſhould have, as the Prophet ſpeaks, *precept upon precept*, *line upon line*, *here a little and there a little*, Iſa. 28. 13. Mans nature is ſo unattentive to good, that there can ſcarce be too many monitors. We ſee Satan tho he have a much ſtronger party in our inclinations,

tions, dares not rely upon it, but is ſtill employing his emiſſaries, to confirm and excite them: and if whilſt he has ſo many agents among us, God ſhall have none, we are like to give but an ill account of our zeal either to God or our neighbour, or of thoſe tongues which were given us to glorifie the one, and benefit the other. Indeed without this, our greateſt officiouſneſs in the ſecular concerns of others is no kindneſs. When we ſtrive to advance the fame, to encreaſe the fortune of a wicked man, what do we in it, but enable him to do the more miſchiefs, by his wealth to foment his own luxuries, and by his reputation commend them to the practice of others? He only makes his friend truly rich and great, who teaches him to employ thoſe advantages aright: and would men turn their tongues to this ſort of oratory, they would indeed ſhew they underſtood for what ends they were given them.

6. But as all good receives enhancement from its being more diffuſive, ſo theſe attemts ſhould not be confined to ſome one or two intimates or relatives, but be as extenſive as the common needs, or at leaſt as our opportunities. 'Tis a generous

nerous ambition to benefit many, to oblige communities: which can no way ſo well be done, as by endeavouring to ſubvert vicious cuſtoms, which are the peſts and poiſons of all ſocieties. The heathens had many ceremonies of luſtrations for their cities and countries, but he that could purifie and refine their manners, would indeed attain to the ſubſtance of thoſe ſhadows. And becauſe the Apoſtle tells us, that *evil words corrupt good manners.* 1 Cor. 15. 33. 'twould be a fundamental piece of reformation, to introduce a better ſort of converſe into the world: which is an inſtance ſo agreeable to my preſent ſubject, that I cannot Cloſe more pertinently, than to commend the endeavour to the Reader, who if he have bin by this Tract at all convinced of the ſin and miſchief of thoſe ſchemes of diſcourſe deciphered in it, cannot be more juſt to his convictions, than by attemting to ſupplant them.

7. IT were indeed a deſign worthy of a noble ſoul, to try to new model the Age in this particular, to make it poſſible for men to be at once converſable and innocent. I know 'twill be objected, 'tis too vaſt a project for one or many ſingle perſons

perſons to undertake: yet difficulties uſe to animate generous ſpirits, eſpecially when (as here) the very attemt is laudable. But as Chriſt ſaies of Wiſdom, ſo may we of Courage, The children of this world are more daring than the children of light. The great corrupters of diſcourſe have not bin ſo diſtruſtful of themſelves: for 'tis viſible to any that will reflect, that 'tis within mans memory ſince much of this monſtrous exorbitancy of diſcourſe grew in faſhion, particularly the Atheiſtical and Blaſphemous. The firſt propugners of it were but few, and durſt then but whiſper their black rudiments: yet the world now ſees what an harveſt they have from their deviliſh induſtry.

8. And ſhall we give over our Clime as forlorn and deſperate, and conclude that nothing which is not venimous will thrive in our ſoil? Would ſome of parts and autority but make the experiment, I cannot think that all places are yet ſo vitiated, but that they may meet with many, who would reliſh ſober and ingenuous diſcourſe, and by their example be animated to propagate it to others: but as long as Blaſphemy, Ribaldry, and Detraction ſet up for Wit, and carry it without

out any competition, we do implicitly yield that title we diſpute not: and 'tis hard to ſay, whether their triumphs be more owing to the boldneſs of ill men, or the puſillanimity of the good. What if upon the trial they ſhould meet with the worſer part of St. *Paul*'s fate at *Athens*, *That ſome will mock*, Acts 17. 32. yet perhaps they may partake of the better alſo, and find others that would be willing *to hear them again*, and ſome few at leaſt *may cleave unto them*. And ſure they are too tender and delicate, that will run no hazard, nor be willing to bear a little ſhare in that profane drollery, with which an Apoſtle was, and their God is daily aſſaulted: eſpecially when by this expoſing themſelves, they may hope to give ſome check to that impious liberty. However beſides the ſatisfaction of their own conſciences, they may alſo gain this advantage by the attemt, that it may be a good teſt by which to try their company. For thoſe whom they find impatient of innocent and profitable converſe, they may aſſure themſelves can only enſnare not benefit them; and he is a very weak gameſter, that will be drawn to play upon ſuch terms as make it highly pro-

bable for him to loſe, but impoſſible for him to win. Therefore in that caſe the advice of *Solomon* is very proper, *Go from the preſence of a fooliſh man, when thou perceiveſt not in him the lips of knowledge*, Prov. 14. 7.

9. BUT he that will undertake ſo Heroic an enterprize, muſt qualify himſelf for it, by being true to his own pretenſions. He muſt leave no uneven thred in his loom, or by indulging to any one ſort of reprovable diſcourſe himſelf, defeat all his endeavours againſt the reſt. Thoſe aëry ſpeculators that have writ of the Philoſophers Stone, have required many perſonal qualifications, ſtrict abſtinences and purities in thoſe who make the experiment. The thing may have this ſober application, that thoſe who would turn this Iron Age into Gold, that would convert our ruſty droſſy Converſe into a purer ſtrein, muſt be perfectly clean themſelves. For alas! what effect can that man hope from his moſt zealous reprehenſions, who laies himſelf open to recrimination? He that hears a man bitterly inveigh againſt blaſphemy and profaneneſs, and (yet in that almoſt the ſame breath) hears his monitor inveigh

veigh as bitterly againſt his neighbour, will ſcarce think him a good guide of his tongue, that has but half the maſtery of his own. Let every man therefore be ſure to begin at the right end of his work, to waſh his own mouth clean, before he preſcribe Gargariſms to others. And to that purpoſe let him impartially reflect on all the undue liberties he has given his tongue, whether thoſe which have been here remarked, or thoſe others which he may find in all practical books, eſpecially in (the moſt practical of all books) his own Conſcience. And when he has trac'd his talk thro all its wild rambles, let him bring home his ſtray; not like the loſt ſheep with joy, but with tears of penitence and contrition, and keep a ſtrict watch over it that it break not looſe again; nay farther require it to make ſome reſtitution for the treſpaſs it has committed in its former excurſions: to reſtore to God what it has rob'd of his honor, by devoting it ſelf an inſtrument of his ſervice; to his neighbour what it has detracted from him, by wiping off that ſullyage it has caſt upon his fame; and to himſelf by defacing thoſe ill characters of vanity and folly it has imprinted on

him. Thus may the Tongue cure its own ſting, and by a kind of ſympathetic virtue, the wound may be healed by dreſſing the weapon. But alas! when we have done all, the Tongue is ſo ſlippery that it will often be in danger to deceive our watch: nay it has a ſecret intelligence with the heart, which like a corrupted Goaler is too apt to connive at its eſcape. Let us therefore ſtrengthen our guards, call in him who ſees all the ſecret practices of our treacherous hearts, and commit both them and our tongues to his cuſtody. Let us ſay with the Pſalmiſt, *Try me, O Lord, and ſeek the ground of my heart.* Pſal. 139. 23. And with him again, *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips, O let not my heart be inclined to any evil thing.* Pſal. 141. 3. And if *hand thus join in hand*, Prov. 16. 5. if Gods grace be humbly invoked, and our own endeavour honeſtly emploied, even this *unruly evil* of the Tongue (as St. *James* calls it) Chap. 3. 8. may be in ſome degree tamed. If now and then it get a little out by ſtealth, yet it will not like the *Demoniac* be ſo raving, as quite to break all its chains. If we cannot alwaies ſecure our ſelves from inadvertence and ſurprize, but that

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a forbidden word may ſometimes eſcape us, yet we may from deliberate willful offences of the Tongue. And tho we ſhould all aſpire higher, yet if we can but reach this, we ought not to excuſe our ſelves (upon remaining infirmities) from the Chriſtian generous undertaking I was recommending, the reforming of others. Indeed I had made a very impertinent exhortation to that, if this degree of fitneſs may not be admitted; for I fear there would be none upon earth could attemt it upon other terms: the world muſt ſtill remain as it is, and await only the tongues of angels to reduce it. Nor need we fear that cenſure of hypocriſy which we find, Mat. 7. 5. for the caſe is very differing. 'Tis indeed as ridiculous as inſolent an attemt, for one that has a a beam in his own eie to pretend to caſt a mote out of his brothers: but it holds not on the contrary, that he that has a mote in his own, ſhould not endeavour to remove the beam in his brothers. Every ſpeck do's not blind a man, nor do's every infirmity make one unable to diſcern, or incompetent to reprove the groſſer faults of others.

10. Yet

10. YET after all let us as much as is poſſible clear our eies even of this mote, and make our Copy as worth tranſcribing as we can: for certainly the beſt inſtrument of reformation is example: and tho admonition may ſometimes be neceſſary, yet there are many circumſtances required to the right ordering of that, ſo that it cannot alwaies be practicable, but a good example ever is. Beſides it has a ſecret magnetic virtue: like the Loadſtone it attracts by a power of which we can give no account: ſo that it ſeems to be one of thoſe occult qualities, thoſe ſecrets in nature, which have puzzled the enquirers; only experience demonſtrates it to us. I am ſure it do's (too abundantly) in ill examples, and I doubt not, might do the like in good, if they were as plentifully experimented. And that that they may be ſo, let every man be ambitious to caſt in his mite: for tho two make but a farthing, yet they may be multiplied to the vaſteſt ſum. However if a man cannot reform others, yet I am ſure 'twill be worth his while, ſo to *ſave himſelf from this untoward generation.* Acts 2. 40. I have now preſented the Tongue under a double aſpect, ſuch as may

may juſtify the ancient definition of it, that it is the worſt and the beſt part of man, the beſt in its original and deſign, and the worſt in its corruption and degeneration. In *David* the man after Gods heart it was his *glory*, Pſal. 57. 8. *The beſt member that he had.* Pſal. 108. 1. *But in the wicked it cuts like a ſharp razor*, Pſal. 52. 3. *'Tis as the venim of aſps*, Pſal. 140. 3. The Tongues from heaven were *cloven*, Acts 2. 2. to be the more diffuſive of good: but thoſe that are *fired from hell*, Jam. 3. 6. are forked, to be the more impreſſive of miſchief: it muſt be referred to every mans choice, into which of the forms he will mould his. *Solomon* tells us, *Death and Life are in the power of the Tongue*, and that not only directly in regard of the good or ill we may do to others, but reflexively alſo, in reſpect of what may rebound to our ſelves. Let *Moſes* then make the inference from *Solomon*'s premiſſes, *Therefore chuſe life*, Deut. 30. 19. a propoſal ſo reaſonable, ſo agreeable to nature, that no flouriſhes can render it more inviting. I ſhall therefore leave it to the Readers contemplation, and ſhall hope that if he pleaſe but to revolve

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it with that ſeriouſneſs which the importance exacts, he will new ſet his tongue, compoſe it to thoſe pious divine ſtrains, which may be a proper preludium to thoſe *Alleluiahs* he hopes eternally to ſing.

FINIS.